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ABSTRACT

A 5-year qualitative study of implementation of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) analyzes the effects on four rural school districts of large-scale changes in state policy. This annual report of the project focuses on five key KERA "strands." First, KERA mandates that grades K-3 be replaced with an ungraded primary program characterized by seven "critical attributes." Developmentally appropriate practices was the most successfully implemented attribute, but dual-age grouping (the preferred multiage pattern of most schools) appeared to be acting as a barrier to continuous progress, a third attribute. With regard to the second strand--instruction, assessment, and accountability--major findings were that the state assessment program was the driving force behind most instructional changes, emphasis on writing had been increased, teachers had mixed reactions to this increased emphasis, and there was little school-wide planning and implementation of instructional changes. The third strand--extended school services (ESS)--involves instruction or tutoring provided at times other than during the regular school day. Reports about the effectiveness of ESS were mixed, possibly because of a wide range in class size and lack of integration with regular classroom programs. Fourth, although school-based decision making as mandated by KERA gives school councils significant authority, the power structure and decision-making processes of particular councils varied considerably and were related to cultural factors unique to each district. Fifth, only the neediest district had applied for and received grants for family resource and youth services centers, sites of integrated services for high-risk youth and families. This report also includes an overview of the KERA funding formula and other state educational funding, research questions for the 5-year project, and Kentucky's academic expectations. Contains 52 references. (SV)

ED 389 489

1993-94 ANNUAL REPORT

AEL Study of KERA Implementation in Four Rural Kentucky School Districts

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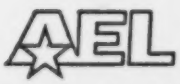

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1993-94 ANNUAL REPORT

AEL Study of KERA Implementation in Four Rural Kentucky School Districts

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June 1995

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section *Page*

THE STUDY 1

Overview 1
Research Methods 1

THE DISTRICTS 3

Lamont County 4
Newtown Independent 6
Orange County 9
Vanderbilt County 11

OVERVIEW OF KERA IMPLEMENTATION IN 1993-94 13

PRIMARY PROGRAM 15

Summary of Issues and Findings 15
Overview of the Law 16
Methodology 17
Major Issues and Preliminary Findings 19
The Seven Critical Attributes 19
Teacher Stress and Burnout 23
Student Skill Acquisition 24
Discussion 24

INSTRUCTION, ASSESSMENT, AND ACCOUNTABILITY 26

Overview of the Law 26
KERA Goals and Expectations 26
Assessment and Accountability 27
Instruction and Assessment in Grades 4-8 29
Summary of Major Findings 29
Methodology 30
Limitations of the Research 31
Expected Instruction and Assessment Changes 32
Major Findings 33
Schoolwide Attempts at Instructional Change 40
Motivations for Change 41

TABLE OF CONTENTS *(cont'd.)*

Section *Page*

KERA Accountability Measures 43
Summary of Major Findings 43
Methodology 44
Major Findings 44
Intended vs. Unintended Effects of the Accountability System 48
School Reactions to Assessment Results 50
Discussion of Findings on Instruction, Assessment, and Accountability 54
Conclusion and Recommendations 56

EXTENDED SCHOOL SERVICES 58

Summary of Major Findings 58
Overview of the Law 59
Methodology 60
Current Status 61
Lamont County 61
Newtown Independent 61
Orange County 62
Vanderbilt County 62
Discussion of Findings 63
"Homework" vs. Direct Instruction Model 63
Class Size 63
Communication Problems 64
Program Effectiveness 65
Integration of ESS with the Total School Program 67
Discussion 68

SCHOOL-BASED DECISION MAKING (SBDM) 70

Summary of Major Findings 70
Overview of the Law: The SBDM Statutes (KRS160.345) 71
The KERA Mandate 71
Council Composition 72
Participation in SBDM by Noncouncil Members 72
Council Responsibilities 72
Methodology 73
District-Level Data 73
State-Level Data 75

TABLE OF CONTENTS *(cont'd.)*

Section *Page*

Current Status of SBDM Implementation 75
Discussion of Major Findings 77
Balanced, Educator-Dominated, and Principal-Dominated Councils 77
Factors That Facilitate or Impede SBDM 78
Council Development in the Four Study Districts 80
Decisions Councils Made 90
Discussion 96

FAMILY RESOURCE AND YOUTH SERVICES CENTERS (FRYSCs) 98

Summary of Major Findings 98
Overview of the Law 99
The Centers 99
Timelines 100
Funding 100
Methodology 101
Current Status of Centers in the Districts 102
Discussion of Major Findings 102
Orange County 102
Three Districts Without Centers 107
Discussion 109

KERA FUNDING IN 1993-94 110

Summary of Major Findings 110
Overview of the Law 110
The SEEK Program 110
Additional State Funds 112
School Construction Funds 112
Methodology 113
Statewide Implementation of the SEEK Formula 114
Increase and Equalization of Funds 114
Tier I 115
Tier II 116
Hold Harmless Provisions 117
Construction Program 118
Categorical Programs 119
Funding for the 1994-96 Biennium 119

TABLE OF CONTENTS *(cont'd.)*

Section *Page*

Major Findings: Local Implementation of the SEEK Formula 120
General Funding for Education 121
Categorical Funding 130
Discussion 136

REFERENCES 139

APPENDICES 144

I: Five-Year Research Questions
II: Kentucky's Academic Expectations

LIST OF TABLES

Table		*Page*
1	1990 Population Data on Four Kentucky School Districts	3
2	School District Data, 1993-94	3
3	Educational Status of the Population in Four Kentucky School Districts	4
4	Number of Primary Program Field Work Activities, 1993-94	18
5	Number of Research Activities on Accountability, 1993-94	45
6	Sources of Information on ESS	60
7	Major SBDM Data Sources	74
8	Data on SBDM Schools	76
9	Interviews Concerning FRYSCs	101
10	SEEK Guaranteed Base Amount Per Pupil	111
11	Field Activities Producing Data on Funding, 1993-94	113
12	Estimated Current Expenditures for Public Elementary and Secondary Schools per Pupil in Average Daily Attendance in Kentucky	114
13	Estimated Average Salaries of Kentucky Public School Teachers	114
14	State Funding for KERA Categorical Programs, 1990-94	119
15	State Funding for KERA Categorical Programs, 1994-96	120
16	Percent of Change in State and Local Revenue to Local Districts since 1989-90	121
17	SEEK Final Calculation Totals Per Pupil, 1993-94, Part I	122
18	SEEK Final Calculation Totals Per Pupil, 1993-94, Part 2	123
19	SEEK Final Calculation Totals Per Pupil, 1993-94, Part 3	124
20	Levied Equivalent Tax Rates, 1989-90 Through 1993-94	124
21	Collection Rates for Real and Tangible Property Taxes	126
22	State Funding for ESS	130
23	State Grants to Orange County for FRYSCs	131
24	State Funding for Gifted Education	132
25	State Funding for Preschool Education	133
26	State Funding for Professional Development	133
27	State Funding for Technology	134

THE STUDY

Overview

The purpose of Appalachia Educational Laboratory's longitudinal qualitative research on implementation of the Kentucky Education Reform Act is to analyze the effects on rural school districts of large-scale changes in state policy and to report policy-relevant information on the consequences of the reform to policymakers, educators, and scholars.

The primary audience for the study is the policy audience in Kentucky. Secondary audiences include the national policy audience, practitioners in Kentucky and elsewhere, other policy researchers, and the general public. The primary objective of the study is to provide policymakers with timely, relevant information to assist them in assessing and fine-tuning the statewide systemic reform being carried out in Kentucky. AEL periodically reports findings through a series of research summaries called "Notes from the Field."

The five-year study focuses on four small rural school districts: three county districts and one independent district. In documenting the implementation of KERA in these districts, the research focuses on five key KERA "strands": the new nongraded primary program; the Family Resource Centers and Youth Service Centers (which provide integrated social service and health service delivery, coordinated by the school); curriculum changes in Grades 4 through 12; finances; and changes in the authority structures of the districts. During 1993-94 AEL also examined the Extended School Services program (which provides help to students who need extra time to meet KERA goals).

Research Methods

This study is qualitative in nature, with each of four researchers assigned primarily to one school district. The study is being carried out as a special project under the direction of the Associate Executive Director.

Relying on qualitative methods inevitably entails some loss of precision, but it avoids the hazard of trivializing an inquiry through premature conclusions. In general, AEL's strategy has been to begin with relatively general research questions and operationalize the research strategy as the study progresses. For example, interviews are conducted primarily with open-ended questions, with a list of more specific probes if the respondent does not touch on all the subjects on which information is desired. This not only helps avoid imposing the researcher's preconceptions on the respondent but provides information on the respondent's preoccupations.

Because qualitative researchers cannot rely on statistical tests of significance except when they occasionally use quantitative strategies, the primary technique for checking the validity and reliability of qualitative data is triangulation of evidence. In other words, evidence is not considered solid unless different sources of information (as many as possible) all point to the

same conclusion. In this study, AEL does not generally publish findings unless they hold true for all four districts, although district-specific findings are reported if they provide policy-relevant information. In addition, different types of evidence are compared with one another. The primary methods of gathering data are observation of key events, focused interviews (using common interview schedules), occasional surveys, and document analysis (including local newspapers).

A set of overall research questions has been developed and has stayed rather stable over the four years of the study. (See Appendix I.) Each year these questions are reviewed, and research activities are planned for the next year. Emphases of the study have varied from year to year, primarily in response to statewide developments in implementation of the various KERA strands. Increasingly, AEL has attempted to address all five strands each year, but limitations of time and resources have prevented this.

Each year the researchers have developed a research plan but have altered it as new opportunities arose or as circumstances dictated that certain activities would not be possible. Staff stay in contact with one another through almost daily e-mail communication, frequent conference calls, and occasional meetings. The research plan for 1993-94 was scaled down several times during the year; this report is based on the final plan. Specific activities are described in each section under the heading "Methodology." It should be noted that there is some overlap in these descriptions, as many interviews and observations (especially of SBDM council meetings) generated data on more than one research question.

THE DISTRICTS

AEL's study of KERA implementation focuses on four small rural school districts: two in eastern Kentucky, one in central Kentucky, and one in western Kentucky. Three of the districts are county school districts, while the fourth is a small independent district serving students in a small city located within the boundaries of a larger county school district. The districts have been assigned pseudonyms to protect their anonymity: Lamont County, Newtown Independent, Orange County, and Vanderbilt County.

Population and other data on the school districts are provided in Tables 1, 2, and 3.

Table 1

1990 Population Data on Four Kentucky School Districts

	Population (rounded)	Population density (persons per square mile)	Percent minority	Per capita income (rounded)	Percent of persons in poverty
Lamont County	9,600	38	1	$ 9,600	19
Newtown City	4,400	1,103	1	11,300	23
Orange County	23,200	89	1	8,500	29
Vanderbilt Co.	10,400	35	9	9,600	19
STATE	3,685,300	93	8	11,200	19

[Sources: U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1991 and 1992.]

Table 2

School District Data, 1993-94

	Number of schools	Average Daily Attendance (ADA) (rounded)	Assessed valuation per pupil in ADA (rounded)	Percent of econ. deprived students in ADA (rounded)
Lamont County	5	1,600	$160,670	30
Newtown City	2	900	161,000	35

Table 2 (cont'd.)

	Number of schools	Average Daily Attendance (ADA) (rounded)	Assessed valuation per pupil in ADA (rounded)	Percent of econ. deprived students in ADA (rounded)
Orange County	8	3,800	71,000	60
Vanderbilt Co.	5	1,600	158,000	40
STATE		582,300	193,000	40

[Sources: Kentucky Department of Education, March 1994, Addendum.]

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[1] A middle school was scheduled to open in the fall of 1994, increasing the number of schools in the district to nine.

Table 3

Educational Status of the Population in Four Kentucky School Districts (some figures rounded)

	Percent of elementary or sec. students in private schools	Percent of persons 25 & older high school grads or higher	Percent of persons 25 & older with bachelors degree or higher	Percent of ninth graders graduating from high school
Lamont County	1	60	5	70
Newtown Indep.	2	65	20	80
Orange County	2	55	10	70
Vanderbilt County	15	60	10	75
STATE	9	65	15	70

[Source for first three columns: U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1992. Source for fourth column: Kentucky Department of Education, 1991-92.]

Lamont County

Lamont County school district is located in an agricultural region of western Kentucky. The district is neither wealthy nor poor. There is very little industry in the county, but it ranked high among the state's 120 counties in 1992 in cash receipts from crops. It ranks in the top 25 for production in corn, dark air tobacco, soybeans, hogs and pigs, and wheat (Kentucky Agricultural Statistics Service, 1993).

Lamont County is close to larger market towns, and many of the county's residents commute to these communities to work or shop. There are no four-lane highways, motels, fast-food chains, or shopping centers in the county. A state survey on tourism revealed that very few tourism dollars are spent in Lamont County (Kentucky Department of Travel Development, 1993).

Lamont County schools have suffered financially because of the agrarian society of which they are a part. The citizens of the county are fiscally conservative and oppose paying higher taxes. The district has historically ranked among the lowest in the state in the amount of local effort toward funding schools. Citizens attribute their reluctance to pay higher taxes to the fact that even though their property values are relatively high, their farms produce relatively low incomes.

After KERA was adopted in 1990, the school board was required to raise the tax rate considerably to reach the minimum rate required by law, but opposition from local farmers resulted in the board not raising the rate high enough to qualify for significant state matching funds. Thus, the district did not benefit from new KERA funding to the extent it might have. In 1993-94, however, the board increased the tax rate to the maximum allowed without a referendum.

The Lamont County school district serves a predominantly white student body of about 1700 students in five schools (one high school and four elementary schools). All of the elementary schools are older buildings that lack air-conditioning and need repair. New facilities funding under KERA, however, has enabled the district to make or plan major improvements. For instance, the cramped, storefront operation that served as a central office has been replaced with a larger, more modern facility. In addition, the district has broken ground for a new middle school to be completed by the 1995-96 school year.

The decision-making structure within the Lamont County school district has changed significantly since 1990. At the time this study began, district leadership was male-dominated and traditional. All certified staff at the central office, all school board members, and all principals were male. Those in power typically made decisions that were passed along to teachers.

Shortly after KERA passed, the veteran school superintendent retired. The superintendent screening committee (mandated by KERA and composed of a school board member, a principal, a parent, and two teachers) interviewed numerous applicants and submitted a list of five finalists to the school board—conspicuously omitting the name of the high school principal who had applied for the job. Much to the chagrin of many people in the community, the school board selected an applicant who not only did not reside in Lamont County but also came from another state.

The new superintendent, who resigned after a year to return to his home state, was instrumental in changing the district hierarchy. He hired the district's first female school-level administrator, reassigned the high school principal (who was attempting to obstruct the implementation of school-based decisionmaking—SBDM), and transferred two women to central office positions. Reassigning the high school principal opened the door for the school council to hire its own principal, and it hired a person who was more supportive of shared decision making. Since that time, two more schools in the district have voted to implement SBDM. One of these councils recently hired a new principal (female).

Lamont County school district has taken advantage of some of the categorical funding provided by KERA. Preschool programs for at-risk four-year-olds have been offered since 1991-92, along with an extended school program for students who need extra help. As of July 1994, the district had not submitted an application for family resource or youth services centers, however, even though all schools in the district were eligible for such centers.

Another problem for Lamont County has been professional development for teachers. In the first two years of KERA implementation, the district supplied professional development only through state funding for this purpose. No additional money was provided by the district. Teachers reported that this level of funding was inadequate to prepare them for the tremendous instructional changes they were being asked to make. In the past two years, some principals and school councils have used the school-based instructional allotment to supplement state professional development funds.

Indicators of student achievement in the district appear to have changed since the passage of KERA. Prior to 1990, student scores on standardized tests were relatively high, and local educators and school officials were proud of providing a sound education in spite of relatively low funding. Students have not done so well on the new performance-based assessments under KERA. While the district's absolute scores were relatively high, they failed to show the required improvement the following year. No school in the county came close to achieving the 1993-94 threshold (goal) set by the state, and two schools actually declined. These results produced a flurry of activity when the central office required all schools to develop a plan for improving 1993-94 assessment results.

Newtown Independent

Newtown Independent school district is a small city district in eastern Kentucky. The city of Newtown serves as a market town for the surrounding area. Not only are there several shopping centers and fast-food chains, but there are a number of banks and several medical facilities that serve much of eastern Kentucky.

Although not particularly affluent by national standards, Newtown is considerably more affluent than the surrounding countryside. This relative prosperity has made it possible for the community to support the schools by raising local taxes above the minimum required by Kentucky law to qualify for state financial aid. In fact, the local school tax rate was already high enough at the time KERA passed to qualify the district for the highest level of matching funds under the KERA funding formula.

District administrators and board members have expressed fear that KERA will eventually result in the closing of independent school districts. This fear seems to be based on the perception that the KERA funding formula "penalizes local initiative" by giving smaller increases in state funding to districts where the local tax rate is already high. (This perception is not entirely accurate, given that the level of state funding depends more on property wealth and poverty rate than on the local tax effort.)

Because of the relatively high rate of local funding for schools (when compared to districts in the same region of the state), the Newtown school district has historically provided many additional teachers who are not supported by the state funding formula. Most eastern Kentucky districts could not afford this luxury. Before KERA, the district also provided higher teacher salaries than surrounding county districts, but this gap has narrowed considerably, if not reversed direction. The relatively poorer county districts received a greater influx of state money and most of them used it for teacher raises.

The Newtown district serves about 1,000 students in two schools: a middle/high school and an elementary school. The two buildings are only about a block apart, but as the elementary principal put it, "you'd think that up the street was ten million miles away." Since KERA, communication has improved between the two sets of faculty, especially among the teachers of grades 5-8, who jointly scored KERA-mandated eighth grade writing and math portfolios in 1993-94.

The Newtown student body is predominantly white, although there is a small (less than 3%) minority student population drawn mainly from international medical personnel practicing in the area. Thirty percent of the student population lives outside the district; they are attracted by Newtown's reputation for excellence.

Ever since KERA passed, many district staff have expressed the opinion that Newtown did not need KERA. Newtown students have historically performed among the highest in the state on standardized tests. The poorer county districts in the area, however, received a larger influx of funding under KERA than did Newtown. Thus, Newtown sources felt they were already serving their students well but were not rewarded for their efforts. They are also dissatisfied with the KERA accountability system, which they feel rewards improvement rather than an absolute standard of excellence.

The district has not embraced some KERA programs that were viewed as godsends by other districts. For example, the district has not developed a preschool program because Head Start serves all eligible four-year-olds. No attempt was made to apply for a grant to establish a family resource center or a youth services center until 1993-94, when a hurried application submitted by the elementary school was not funded. Also, neither school voted to implement SBDM, so the district had to appoint a school.

Like Lamont County, the Newtown school administration has undergone a complete turnover since KERA, although the change does not seem to have been as closely related to KERA. All administrators in the district were male at the time KERA passed. The administration remained stable for the next two years. Then the long-time assistant superintendent—who had been vocal in his dissatisfaction with KERA—retired before the 1993-94 school year and was replaced by the elementary school principal. The superintendent retired before the 1994-95 school year and was replaced by his assistant (the former principal), who was one of two applicants recommended by a screening committee. The high school principal became assistant superintendent.

Newtown teachers attribute their initial reluctance to implement SBDM to the fact that they had always had significant input into decision making. Some educators also feared that active parents would try to force unwanted changes. As KERA requires, however, in July 1991 the local board selected a school (the elementary school) to implement SBDM. After a rocky start, the council evolved into something of a model (among councils in this study) of shared decision making. This came about largely because the principal was not domineering and because teachers and parents on the council took the initiative along with the principal to implement SBDM. Also, all council members served two consecutive terms and came to know and trust one another. The new principal, however, has a more directive style, and decision making shifted toward a more principal-dominated mode in 1993-94.

When the elementary principal was transferred to the central office in 1993, the council hired the female high school counselor to replace him. Although council members said the new principal was well-qualified for the position, some resentment was expressed that the superintendent only forwarded the name of this one applicant to the council for its consideration.

Newtown High School began implementing SBDM in 1994-95. The new council took a lot of heat over its first action, which was to hire a new principal. A relatively inexperienced young man was selected from outside the district over a woman who had taught at Newtown High School for 16 years and was the wife of the former superintendent.

Although it is too soon to tell how Newtown students will perform on the new KERA assessment, early results indicate that the district's tradition of excellence may continue. The elementary school achieved the 1993-94 threshold score in 1992-93, while the middle/high school moved about halfway toward the threshold scores.

Orange County

Orange County is situated near the West Virginia border about equidistant between the northern and southern borders of Kentucky. A major north-south highway runs through the county, providing easy access to other parts of the state.

Historically the county economy has been largely dependent on coal mining, but only one substantial mine remains open. Many residents commute to nearby counties to work in the mining industry, either as miners or administrators. Others participate in a mixed economy, which provides more minimum-wage jobs than professional salaries. There are several small manufacturing plants, and the county seat is the market town for a large hinterland which includes all the surrounding counties. A large lake, a local festival, and the birthplace of a famous personality attract a modest tourist trade to the county. Agriculture plays a minor role in the economy.

An independent school district within the county has a higher tax base than the rest of the county. As a result, local support for schools is considerably lower in the county district than in the independent district. Assessed property value per pupil in Orange County is quite low, ranking in the first decile statewide. Over 60 percent of the pupils in the district qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.

The school board raised local taxes substantially to take advantage of matching funds provided through KERA. New funding has improved the district's financial status, allowing it to offer (for the first time) slightly higher teacher salaries than the independent district. In addition, the district has been able to invest in many new materials and in technology.

There are about 4,000 students in the district, making it the largest in the study. There are nine schools: a high school, a middle school (which opened in July, 1994), six elementary schools, and an alternative school serving middle and high school students. The high school, middle school, and central office building are located on a large campus, which also boasts a wide variety of playing fields and an indoor sports center. It is fairly easy for the various schools to interact, as none of the outlying schools is more than ten miles from the central campus. Students are frequently bused to the central campus for intramural games or other events.

A priority for the use of KERA money has been professional development. The district has also invested considerably more in professional development than is earmarked by the state. The result has been that every teacher and administrator has had multiple opportunities for intensive training, and many teachers and administrators are qualified to train others in a variety of programs and techniques. These trainers have trained not only local teachers but also those in many nearby districts.

Over the past few years the number of women in leadership roles in Orange County has increased. About half of the central office professional staff is female. A woman was recently named as assistant superintendent. There are two female elementary school principals, and most of the Family Resource Center (FRC) and Youth Services Center (YSC) directors are female. Other local agencies appear to be following the same trend, as the local weekly newspaper has featured a series of articles about local women in nontraditional leadership roles.

For the most part, district administrators have encouraged school administrators and teachers to take advantage of the opportunities available to them through KERA. Nevertheless, mixed messages about school-based decision making (SBDM) led to its adoption by only one elementary school until the fall of 1993, when the high school faculty voted to adopt it. The school board has passed several resolutions to encourage school administrators to urge their faculties to adopt SBDM well ahead of the 1996 deadline, and district administrators have made changes to prepare schools to govern themselves. For example, for the past three years all schools have been required to develop individual school budgets and to submit purchase orders for all materials.

District and school administrators have submitted proposals for FRCs or YSCs for every school in the district since 1991-92. Three centers were funded in the first year: a YSC and two FRCs. In 1993 two additional elementary centers were funded, and in 1994 two more FRCs were funded. All schools in the district now have centers, except the new middle school which submitted a YSC proposal in 1994 but was not funded.

At the same time as the superintendent and central office staff have provided strong leadership for KERA implementation, there has been enough political turmoil in the district to cause fairly major problems. A great deal of controversy attended a grand jury investigation into charges of corruption in the district, and the hiring of a new superintendent at the end of 1993-94 was marred by charges of unfair political maneuvering. Central office staff have been pleased with the new superintendent's leadership so far, but he must contend with a great deal of public skepticism and even outrage, which may weaken his authority.

Orange County serves a large number of at-risk students and has historically had very low academic achievement. Just prior to KERA (in 1989-90), there was a dramatic improvement in student achievement, leading to a rank that for the first time was less than 100th of 177 Kentucky districts. When the 1992-93 results of the state assessment (Kentucky Instructional Results Information System) were published, two elementary schools had exceeded their thresholds and the remaining four elementary schools and the high school had progressed toward their thresholds. One elementary school exceeded its threshold to such a degree that it raised the county average considerably. In 1993-94, the KIRIS scores placed the district between 35th and 40th in the state; there was even more dramatic improvement in terms of gains over the baseline scores set in 1992.

Vanderbilt County

Vanderbilt County school district is in the Bluegrass region of central Kentucky. The district has much in common with Lamont County. Although there are a number of small industries in the area, agriculture and the school system are the two major employers. The rolling farmland results in a more diverse agricultural system than in Lamont County, where the flat land is best suited to grain crops. While Lamont ranks 15th in the state in receipts from crops, Vanderbilt ranks 16th in receipts from livestock. The major sources of agricultural income in Vanderbilt County are dairy cattle, beef cattle, hay, and burley tobacco. Farms are considerably smaller than in Lamont County, possibly because livestock and tobacco do not require as much acreage as corn and grain (Kentucky Agricultural Statistics Service, 1993).

Vanderbilt County is within an hour's drive of two of the state's largest cities, and many local residents travel to these cities for work. Several historical attractions located in the county or nearby, along with a small Amish community, bring some tourist trade into the area. Even though Vanderbilt County is small, rural, and agricultural like Lamont County, it has more contact with metropolitan areas.

The Vanderbilt County school district serves about 1700 students in five schools. About 10 percent of students in the district are classified as minorities—mostly African-American students who reside in the county seat and attend a centrally located elementary school and the consolidated high school. About half of all students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. A large number of county residents are Catholic, and an elementary parochial school pulls some students from the county school district. This results in a slightly disproportionate number of special education students in the public schools because the parochial school does not serve these students.

The difference in attitudes between Lamont and Vanderbilt County residents after KERA passed was striking. At that time, the two districts had identical equivalent tax rates. The Vanderbilt school board then raised its tax rate substantially with little protest from citizens. The substantial income produced from the new taxes and state matching money, in addition to past savings resulting from sound fiscal management, enabled the district to make significant strides in implementing KERA. For instance, the district invested $800,000 in computers and computer training. Every elementary classroom was equipped with five computers, and the high school received a computer lab. In addition, significant amounts of money were invested in instructional materials, library supplies, and professional development. The district also offers the KERA preschool program to all four-year-olds who want to participate, rather than restricting it to at-risk four-year-olds (the population for which the state provides preschool funding).

The one aspect of KERA that the district has been unable to take advantage of is family resource/youth services centers. No attempt was made to apply for the centers the first year the

grants were available. A rushed attempt was made by two schools to submit a grant in 1992-93, but the grant was not funded. A second attempt at obtaining a grant in 1993-94 also failed.

Vanderbilt County has been described by many local and outside sources as a very congenial community, and this congeniality carries over to the school system. The superintendent, who has served for over 10 years, established a tradition of forming committees and getting input from school-level personnel on key decisions long before KERA. He has cultivated his relationship with the school board, carefully and meticulously informing members about school district business. This has resulted in a smooth working relationship between the board and the superintendent.

After KERA passed, the superintendent urged all schools to implement SBDM, and four of five did. The school board paid a consultant to train all board members, school council members, and central office administrators on SBDM. The consultant also assisted a committee of teachers and principals in developing a district-wide SBDM policy and implementation manual.

Perhaps because of the history of congenial relations and a measure of shared decision making—along with a strong superintendent—the decision-making structure in Vanderbilt County has not changed a great deal since the passage of KERA. The superintendent and school principals have continued to obtain "input" into key decisions, but SBDM councils have, for the most part, not assumed the role of key decision makers at the school. The majority of teachers we have talked to appear to be satisfied with this arrangement, probably because they feel they have a say in what happens at the school. Many parents who have served on school councils, however, reported feeling left out of the decision-making process.

One woman who served as special programs coordinator was working at the central office when KERA passed; she is still the only female there. All five principals were men, but one of them resigned and the new school council hired a female principal from outside the district. When two central office positions opened up in the summer of 1994, they were filled by the high school principal and the high school counselor—both men who had worked at the high school for a number of years.

Vanderbilt County students have traditionally performed near or slightly above the state average on standardized tests. Student performance on the new KERA assessments has, so far, been a source of pride. The three outlying elementary schools exceeded their 1993-94 threshold score in 1992-93, and the central elementary progressed about halfway toward the 1993-94 goal. The high school made the least amount of progress, but did not fall below the baseline score as did many other high schools around the state.

OVERVIEW OF KERA IMPLEMENTATION IN 1993-94

Perhaps the most important occurrence related to KERA implementation in 1993-94 was the release of the first round of performance assessment results from the Kentucky Instructional Results Information System (KIRIS). Schools and districts were tested on KIRIS in 1991-92 to establish baseline scores against which to measure future performance. Schools and districts are expected to raise their KIRIS scores (known as "accountability indices") to specified levels over a two-year period to earn rewards and avoid sanctions. The average of 1992-93 and 1993-94 scores will be used to determine if schools have met these state goals.

The release of 1992-93 scores during the 1993-94 school year gave schools and districts an indication of how they were progressing toward meeting their goals. The scores sparked a flurry of activity at several of the schools we studied, while other schools responded with little cohesive action.

Another important development was the continuing emergence of a vocal, organized movement against KERA. The movement has close ties to the national movement against outcomes-based education. To date, we have seen no strong effects of the movement in the study districts. The movement has been strongest in Lamont County, where a local affiliate group was organized. Parent representatives elected to 1993-94 councils at two schools were members of this group. In Vanderbilt County, a series of anti-KERA meetings were held but no organized opposition emerged. Few signs of an organized anti-KERA movement have been detected in Orange County and Newtown Independent. We continued to monitor the effects of this movement in the four study districts during 1994-95.

In addition to these two rather visible developments, the state legislature made some changes to KERA, most of them at the request of the Kentucky Department of Education. In response to complaints statewide that the assessment burden was too great for teachers at the accountable grade levels, the math portfolio was moved from Grade 4 to Grade 5 and portions of the high school test from Grade 12 to Grade 11. Imposition of the most severe sanctions in the accountability system was delayed for two years in order to give schools more time to improve. Somewhat related to this was an extension by two years of the option for local school boards to use up to five instructional days in the school term (in addition to four mandated days) for professional development—an opportunity that also existed during the 1992-94 biennium.

Several pieces of legislation affected school based decision making (SBDM). School council members are now subject to the same removal proceedings as other public school officers. School councils must receive an allocation for professional development according to a set formula. Council members, once elected, may vote to extend their terms to two years. Parent council members shall be elected by parents of all enrolled students rather than only members of the parent-teacher organization. School councils that establish committees must develop a policy to facilitate the participation of interested persons. Finally, schools with eight percent or more

minority enrollment must have a minority member on the school council. These changes to the SBDM statutes did not become effective until the summer of 1994, so we have only begun to see how the changes will affect the districts.

All elementary schools in the state were supposed to implement the primary program in 1993-94, although the state department of education backed off somewhat from requiring the inclusion of kindergarten students in the program. The department released guidelines stating that first-year primary students should be incorporated into the program only as much as is developmentally appropriate. The guidelines state specifically that young students may be kept in a self-contained setting the first half of the year and only minimally integrated during the second half. While the guidelines stressed that such decisions should be made on an individual basis, our research suggests that some schools made these decisions for entire groups of first-year students.

The number of SBDM councils statewide continued to increase in 1993-94, although not as dramatically as initially. From September 1991 to June 1992, the number of councils increased from 168 to 504. By January 1993, 600 councils were in place. At mid-year in 1993-94, just under 700 councils existed (Kentucky Department of Education, November 1993). After seven schools in the four study districts voted to implement SBDM beginning in 1991-92—one each in Lamont County, Newtown Independent, and Orange County, and four in Vanderbilt County—no new councils began operating in 1992-93. In 1993-94, however, two additional Lamont County schools, one additional Newtown school, and one additional Orange County school began implementing SBDM. A third Orange County school was expected to implement SBDM early in the 1994-95 school year.

The state fell behind schedule in implementing family resource and youth services centers (FRYSCs). During the 1993-94 school year, 373 centers served 638 schools, which represents 57 percent of eligible schools (Kentucky Department of Education, November 1993). Funding was built into the 1994-96 budget, however, for all remaining eligible sites. Legislation passed in 1994 to extend the deadline for implementing centers at all eligible sites until 1997. In the four study districts, there was still only one district—Orange County—implementing FRYSCs. Both Vanderbilt County and Newtown submitted grant proposals in 1993-94 in hopes of establishing centers in 1995-96, but neither district was successful. Lamont County has not submitted a proposal for an FRC or a YSC.

A state budget shortfall combined with a miscalculation of the number of enrolled students resulted in a slight reduction in state funds for school districts statewide. Given the rather drastic cuts in other parts of the state budget, however, funding for elementary and secondary education fared relatively well. The 1994-96 state budget included a $26 million increase for basic public school funding. The guaranteed base amount of funding per pupil will increase in 1995-96, as will funding for FRYSCs, professional development, and technology.

PRIMARY PROGRAM

Summary of Issues and Findings

AEL researchers' brief forays into primary program classrooms in 1993-94 did not provide sufficient data to draw definitive conclusions, beyond those reported in the spring 1993 issue of "Notes from the Field." We did, however, identify several preliminary findings and issues that need further investigation:

- Of the seven critical attributes identified by the Kentucky Department of Education, developmentally appropriate practices and multiage/multi-ability grouping seem to be driving what primary teachers do more than the other attributes.

- Developmentally appropriate practices still appear to be the most successfully implemented attribute, as was reported in 1992-93.

- Continuous progress, which we identified in 1992-93 as the most difficult attribute of the primary program to implement, continues to be an elusive goal. It appears that many primary teachers concentrate on meeting the multiage requirements of the program rather than shaping their programs around the overarching goal of allowing students to progress through the program at their own rate.

- Dual-age grouping has become the pattern of choice for the majority of elementary schools in our study. The number of schools using dual-age rather than multiage grouping increased slightly over last year.

- Dual-age grouping, because it results in the creation of distinct, age-level classrooms and groups, may be acting as a barrier to continuous progress.

- There were indications that regular joint planning time among primary teachers occurs at only a few schools.

- Some teachers reported that the primary program is still consuming a lot of teacher time. A few teachers said the program would consume even more time if they did everything they should.

- We heard more reports that primary students are ***not*** acquiring basic skills than that they ***are*** acquiring these skills.

Overview of the Law

KERA mandates that grades K-3 be replaced with an ungraded primary program. The rationale behind the program is that students progress at their own rate through the primary years without experiencing the stigma of early school failure. Implementation of the primary program began in 1992-93, and the program was supposed to be fully implemented in all elementary schools by the beginning of the 1993-94 school year.

Full implementation of the primary program means that seven "critical attributes" must be addressed to some degree in every primary classroom in the state. These attributes were designed by the state department of education to enable primary students to achieve the six broad learning goals specified in KERA. The attributes are as follows:

(1) **Developmentally appropriate practices**: Instructional practices that address the physical, aesthetic, cognitive, emotional, and social domains of children and that permit them to progress through an integrated curriculum according to their unique learning needs.

(2) **Multiage/multi-ability classrooms**: Flexible grouping and regrouping of children of different age, sex, and ability who may be assigned to the same teacher(s) for more than one year.

(3) **Continuous progress**: A student's unique progression through the primary school program at his/her own rate without comparison to the rate of others or consideration of the number of years in school. Retention and promotion with[in] the primary school program are not compatible with continuous progress.

(4) **Authentic assessment**: Assessment that occurs continually in the context of the learning environment and reflects actual learning experiences that can be documented through observation, anecdotal records, journals, logs, actual work samples, conferences, and other methods.

(5) **Qualitative reporting methods**: Communication of progress through a variety of home-school communiques, which address the growth and development of the whole child as s/he progresses through the primary program.

(6) **Professional teamwork**: All professional staff in the primary school program communicate and plan on a regular basis and use a variety of instructional delivery systems such as team teaching and collaborative teaching.

(7) **Positive parent involvement**: The establishment of productive relationships between the school and the home, individuals, or groups that enhance

communication, promote understanding, and increase opportunities for children to experience success in the primary program (Kentucky Department of Education, January 1993).

The Kentucky Department of Education developed a regulation for an interim process for determining successful completion of the primary program, which was adopted by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education in December 1992. The regulation has since been extended through the spring of 1996 (Kentucky Department of Education, June 1994). Districts or schools may follow this process or devise their own method for verifying successful completion.

The interim process requires that determination of successful completion be made on an individual basis and supported by student work samples, observational checklists, and anecdotal records. A school team that includes the parents of the identified child determines if the child should exit the primary program early or late. The regulation lists 18 expectations and capabilities that serve as the focus for determining student eligibility to exit the program (Kentucky Department of Education, January 1993).

Another tool available to primary teachers statewide is the Kentucky Early Learning Profile (KELP). KELP is a tool for documenting student progress through the primary program. It is also designed to support appropriate curriculum and instruction in the primary program, verify successful completion of the program, communicate with and involve parents in the assessment process, and constitute a staff development program on using authentic assessment (Kentucky Department of Education, June 1994). KELP was developed by the state's assessment contractor and was piloted during the 1992-93 school year and field tested in 1993-94. Training in the use of KELP was available to primary teachers across the state in the summer of 1994.

Methodology

The research agenda for the 1993-94 school year did not permit an in-depth look at the primary program. However, in May 1994 we revisited the elementary schools we had visited during an in-depth look at the primary program in 1992-93. The purpose of these visits was to obtain an update on primary program implementation and identify research questions for 1994-95.

We visited two schools each in Lamont County and Vanderbilt County, three schools in Orange County, and one school in Newtown Independent. This represents 100 percent of elementary schools in Newtown Independent and 50 percent of the elementary schools in the other three districts.

We spent approximately one half-day at each school and gathered whatever data we could on the primary program during that time. Typically, we made brief classroom observations,

interviewed two or more primary teachers, and interviewed the principal. We also interviewed parent council members, some of whom had children in the primary program, and gathered data at SBDM council meetings and at miscellaneous activities. Table 4 lists activities relating to the primary program for each school.

Table 4

Number of Primary Program Field Work Activities, 1993-94

	Lamont			Newtown	Orange				Vanderbilt		
SCHOOL:	*1*	*2*	*3*	*1*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*1*	*2*	**TOTAL**
Interviews											
Prim. tchrs.	10	3	3	4	1	3	2	0	3	5	34
Principals	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	7
Parents	1	1	2	1	0	1	0	0	1	2	8
4th grade teachers	2	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	6
5th grade teachers	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
Observations											
Classrooms observed	3	2	0	3	3	2	0	0	2	7	22
SBDM council meetings	2	0	1	5	0	3	0	0	1	1	13
Document review											
Class newsletter	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Local newspaper	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	4
Parent surveys	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

Major Issues and Preliminary Findings

The Seven Critical Attributes

As was true during the 1992-93 school year, all schools appeared to be putting a great deal of effort into implementing the first two critical attributes: developmentally appropriate practices and multiage/multi-ability grouping. In fact, it appeared that these areas, more than any other attribute, were driving what teachers did. A closer look at each attribute is provided below.

Developmentally appropriate practices. The most common instructional approaches we saw or heard about were the use of thematic units, learning centers, writing activities, authentic literature, and whole language. We also noted that nearly all primary classrooms were arranged for student interaction, as was also true last year. Also in keeping with our earlier findings, we found that primary teachers were generally enthusiastic about the new instructional approaches.

There were, however, a few indications of problems with implementing new instructional practices. For example, it appeared that teachers were using thematic instruction (the most common instructional approach we observed or heard about) to teach science or social studies rather than to integrate the curriculum. Also, a few teachers reported that their instruction was more traditional this year than last year. An Orange County primary teacher, noting that a colleague works mainly from textbooks with her fourth-year primary students, said that the primary program at her school was moving backwards.

A Vanderbilt County teacher said she had fallen back on textbooks and workbooks in 1993-94 to meet the needs of a very low-functioning group of children. She remarked:

> I've taught for 15 years and this has by far been the lowest group of students I've ever taught. A lot of the new ways have worked well with them, but there were so many basics they were missing that I have pulled back and copied a page out of an old phonics book or pulled out an old basal that had what I wanted, and it has really worked well.... I'm comfortable with the new [approaches] but it just wasn't giving them what they needed.

In general, however, it appeared that instruction in primary classrooms was varied and designed to meet the needs of young children. Further study in 1994-95 will provide a clearer picture of this issue.

The statewide availability of the Kentucky Early Learning Profile (KELP) in 1994-95 may affect the instructional practices employed by primary teachers. A key component of KELP requires primary students to complete nine types of performances, many of them annually: pose a question and research to get an answer; communicate through oral and written language;

communicate through an aesthetic project, performance, or reflection of appreciation; read for literary experience, to gain information, and to perform a task; solve a real-life problem using computation and problem-solving skills; complete and present a long-term project that integrates subject matter from more than one discipline; participate in completing and reporting on a group project; develop a "lifeline" representing and reflecting personal growth and learning; and develop a personal well-being plan or project. Our observations suggest that many primary teachers are already engaging students in activities that fall into these categories. KELP, although it is optional, provides further encouragement to do so.

Multiage, multi-ability classrooms. Dual-age grouping has become the pattern of choice for the majority of elementary schools in our study. The number of schools using dual-age rather than multiagegrouping increased slightly over last year because two schools (in Newtown and Orange County) switched to dual-age groups. Another school in Lamont County plans to replace its multiage groups with dual-age groups in 1994-95.

A few teachers said they would prefer to return to single-age grouping because it is too difficult to manage the varying age levels inmultiage classrooms. One teacher remarked:

> I don't like two grades, multi-aging. I don't even think it's good on the playground. I am always torn between, am I giving the second grade too much work and not giving the third grade enough?

Another teacher commented:

> Of all the things in the primary, if I could throw out one thing, it would be themultiage. I see a lot of good things with using themes and lots of literature, but themultiage....

The second teacher clarified that she was only talking about the inclusion of the entry level, kindergarten students.

Although some teachers continued to struggle with the idea of multiage grouping, we heard fewer reports this year than last that teachers did not want kindergarten students in the primary program. Some teachers and parents in two districts reported that kindergarten integration into the program was working well and that kindergarten students were benefitting from the program. Newtown Elementary was the only school where we heard of a shift towards excluding kindergarten students from the primary program.

Further investigation into the issue of student grouping is needed during 1994-95. Specifically, we need to examine how teachers decide how to group students. Our impression has been that teachers merely try to fulfill the state requirement for multiage grouping and find it so difficult that they are moving toward the least amount of multiage grouping that they can.

We also need to investigate the type of skills grouping that is occurring. Teachers at five schools (one in Lamont County, one in Newtown, one in Orange County, and two in Vanderbilt County) group students into skill or grade groups for math and reading instruction. We need to determine how flexible these groups are.

Continuous progress. In 1992-93, we identified continuous progress as the most difficult attribute of the primary program to implement. At that time, we also identified it as the most critical of the attributes because we felt it embodied the ultimate goal of the program—to enable children to progress through primary school at their own pace without the stigma of early failure. State department of education officials, however, deny that the continuous progress attribute is any more important than the others. Indeed, the regulation that defines the attributes gives no more weight to this attribute than to the others.

Regardless of the relative importance of continuous progress, it seems to be an elusive goal for the primary program. There was evidence that continuous progress is facilitated when teachers work in teams. However, it appeared that many primary teachers were concentrating their energy on meeting the multiage requirements of the program rather than shaping programs around the over-arching goal of allowing students to progress through the program at their own rate. The widespread continued use of grade level designations for students in multiage classrooms seems to be an indication of the hold the traditional graded system has on teachers and administrators. Educators, for the most part, appear to have embraced the new methods encouraged by the primary program, but have failed to adopt the philosophy of nongradedness.

Dual-age grouping—the most common grouping pattern we observed—appeared to act as a barrier to continuous progress because it resulted in the creation of distinct, age-level classrooms and groups. Thus, students are clearly aware when they have advanced (or not) to the next dual-age room. Continuous progress ***within*** dual-age classrooms is being stymied at some schools where teachers do not keep the same students for two years in a row. This shifting of students reportedly occurs because teachers do not want any one teacher to end up with all of the "good" or "bad" students for two years in a row. A teacher explained:

> I think some of the teachers would like to keep their second grade next year, but I've got some awfully hard discipline problems. I've got some that it would just be fair for somebody else to try them. It wouldn't be fair for any teacher to have two of these [students] for two years.

Admittedly, managing continuous progress in a classroom of 20-25 students of differing ability levels is a daunting task. A Vanderbilt County principal spoke to this issue:

> We've started some of that but...it's very difficult to have an individual education plan for every child in the classroom. If we did it the way it's supposed to be done, that's really what we're talking about. There are some things the kids will do together, but keeping six or seven subject areas flowing like that is difficult.

Special education teachers have done it for years, but they have fewer children and they usually have an aide.

The Kentucky Early Learning Profile (KELP), which will be available statewide during the 1994-95 school year, was designed to help teachers document and keep up with the individual progress of each child. Use of KELP is optional, however, and it remains to be seen how many schools will attempt to use this or other tools to help them monitor individual student progress.

We need to examine closely the continuous progress attribute next year. One aspect we need to examine is "retention" of students in the primary program—how many students remain in the program for a fifth year, whether this helps or hurts the child's continuous progress, whether it stigmatizes the student, and whether students in dual-age classrooms are retained early in the primary program.

Authentic assessment. In 1992-93, we found that teachers were struggling to incorporate authentic assessment into their classrooms, with varying degrees of success. Our brief visits in 1993-94 yielded very little data on authentic assessment, beyond reports that some primary teachers were having their students keep portfolios.

Two recent developments in this area deserve close investigation in 1994-95. First, the "Diary of Observations," a key component of KELP, provides several optional forms and suggestions for ways in which teachers can keep anecdotal records on students. For schools not using KELP, we need to learn what sort of alternative instruments they have developed.

Second, the state has established a new requirement that primary students take at least one portfolio piece with them to the fourth grade. This should result in all primary teachers incorporating portfolios into their classrooms to some degree. In addition, it may foster greater communication and continuity between the primary and fourth-grade programs.

Qualitative reporting methods. We reported in 1992-93 that teachers in all four districts had developed new primary progress reports that communicated student progress to parents in qualitative ways, and that some primary teachers were holding regular parent/teacher conferences and sending home interim reports or newsletters. In 1993-94, we gathered little additional data on this attribute. The primary progress reports were still in use, but some teachers remarked that their reporting forms did not meet their needs. One teacher said that the new progress report "tells parents nothing." In one district, the SBDM council (at the instigation of the principal) requested that primary teachers agree on a single form rather than have every teacher make up his/her own. The council cited parental confusion as the reason for this request.

Teachers will have several resources available to them in 1994-95 in designing progress reports. In May 1994, the state department of education disseminated a sample primary progress report to all elementary schools. In addition, KELP contains four versions of a progress report that schools can use. Schools are free to use any of these versions or design their own progress reports.

Professional teamwork. In 1992-93, we found collaborative planning occurring among primary teachers at some schools, but only about half the schools scheduled time into the school day for common planning. Teachers at some schools did not plan together at all. Data gathered in 1993-94 was limited, but we did determine that joint planning time for primary teachers was scheduled at five schools and that no joint planning time was scheduled at four schools. This was a retrogression for one school, where common planning time was scheduled for primary teachers in 1992-93 but not in 1993-94.

It was not clear which schools actually used the joint planning time, but it appears that teachers planned together at four schools. At two schools, some teachers took advantage of the joint planning time but others did not. No joint planning occurred at three schools.

This attribute needs to be investigated further in 1994-95. Specific questions to ask are:

- What is team planning used for?
- How often does team planning occur?
- Who participates?
- Is team planning formal or informal?
- How is common planning time provided?
- What impact do classroom physical arrangements have on teacher communication and interaction?
- How much collaborative or team teaching is occurring?

We also need to find out how special education students are being served in the primary program. There were some indications of a move toward pulling special education students out of the primary program.

Positive parent involvement. In 1992-93, we found that most schools were seeking to increase communication with parents, with varying degrees of success. We gathered very little data on this in 1993-94 and need to investigate the issue further next year. Again, KELP may play a role in parent involvement because it encourages parent participation in the primary program. For instance, KELP progress reports are designed to be shared with parents three times a year during parent conferences.

Teacher Stress and Burnout

Primary teachers reported in 1992-93 that time was the major barrier to successful primary program implementation. In 1993-94, most of the teachers who mentioned time said the primary program is still consuming a great deal of teacher time. One teacher who retired at the end of 1993-94 said she was burned out by trying to implement the program without adequate resources. Teachers at a school that had field-tested KELP attributed much of the stress and time demands to KELP implementation. Teachers not using KELP also reported putting in a great deal of time

implementing the primary program. A team of teachers at a Lamont County school described the extra time they put in:

> You're looking at a team sitting here with you this afternoon that, unless we had a doctor's appointment, a class, family obligations—which should be a top priority but somehow go down to the bottom of the list—we're here until at least 5:00, 5:30, 6:00 every day.

A few teachers said the primary program would consume even more of their time if they did everything they should. Only two teachers reported that the primary program was less time-consuming in 1993-94 than previously.

Student Skill Acquisition

We heard more reports that primary students are ***not*** acquiring basic skills than that they ***are*** acquiring these skills. The most common complaint was that students are not learning how to spell. This complaint came from both upper primary teachers and fourth-grade teachers, as well as from one parent. It is possible that teachers and parents are more aware of spelling deficits now than in the past because students are writing more frequently. This issue warrants further study in 1994-95.

We also heard reports of primary students lacking miscellaneous "basic skills" such as reading, math, cursive writing, phonics, or unspecified "basic" skills. These reports came more often from fourth- and fifth-grade teachers than from primary program teachers.

We heard 16 reports that primary students are lacking in basic skills, while 11 sources reported that students are learning more than they did under the traditional primary program. These reports are not necessarily contradictory. With less emphasis on drill and practice in the primary program, it could be that students are learning more of different kinds of things than in previous years, yet are deficient in some basic skills.

Several upper primary teachers reported, however, that students' writing abilities improved due to the increased amount of writing in the classroom. In addition, some teachers of entry-level primary students reported that these students had learned far more skills than they would have acquired in self-contained kindergarten rooms.

Discussion

Our limited 1993-94 field work on the primary program produced more questions than answers. These questions will guide research in 1994-95. Specifically, we need to examine the

issue of continuous progress in greater depth by discussing the issue openly with teachers, principals, and parents. Field work over the past two years suggests that this attribute is not being successfully implemented. We need to explore the reasons for this.

Closely linked with the issue of continuous progress is the apparent trend toward dual-age grouping, which may inhibit continuous progress. It appears that teachers find dual-age grouping more manageable than multiage grouping, and yet their instructional methods continue to be based on a grade-grouping mind set.

Authentic assessment and qualitative reporting appear to have been incorporated to some degree in most primary classrooms, but we need to examine these issues further. Professional teamwork and positive parent involvement appear to have been minimally incorporated and have perhaps reached a plateau. Again, further investigation is needed. Another area in need of further study is the extent to which teachers have incorporated all seven critical attributes into their classrooms in a seamless way.

In sum, what we seem to be seeing in the primary program is that teachers have seen the need for and embraced a variety of new instructional practices that meet the needs of young children. While a few teachers have recognized the benefits of combining children of different ages in one classroom, many have found multiage grouping difficult to manage, and have been pulling away from it.

INSTRUCTION, ASSESSMENT, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The Kentucky Education Reform Act links instruction and assessment so closely that it is impossible to study one without the other. The Kentucky Instructional Results Information System (KIRIS), a performance-based assessment program, was designed to drive educators to engage students in instructional activities that will help them achieve KERA goals (Guskey, 1994; Kifer, 1994). In addition, accountability measures tied to schools' performance on KIRIS increases the incentive for educators to plan activities that mirror those of the assessment program.

During the 1993-94 school year, we studied how KERA has affected instruction in grades 4 through 8. In doing so, we discovered just how closely linked assessment, instruction, and accountability were. While analyzing our data and preparing this report, however, we found that it was possible to separate to some degree the issue of accountability from the issues of assessment and instruction. Because the overview of the law section addresses all three issues, it appears first.

Overview of the Law

KERA Goals and Expectations

KERA requires few specific instructional mandates for Grades 4-12 (unlike the primary program). Schools are required to achieve six goals, and to show improvement from one biennium to the next on the proportion of students who successfully achieve those goals. The law states that schools shall:

(a) Expect a high level of achievement of all students;

(b) Develop students' ability to:

1. Use basic communication and math skills for purposes and situations they will encounter throughout their lives;

2. Apply core concepts and principles from mathematics, the sciences, the arts, the humanities, social studies, practical living studies, and vocational studies to situations they will encounter throughout their lives;

3. Become self-sufficient individuals;

4. Become responsible members of a family, work group, or community, including demonstrating effectiveness in community service;

5. Think and solve problems in school situations and in a variety of situations they will encounter in life; and

6. Connect and integrate experiences and new knowledge from all subject matter fields with what they have previously learned and build on past learning experiences to acquire new information through various media sources;

(c) Increase students' rate of school attendance;

(d) Reduce dropout and retention rates;

(e) Reduce physical and mental health barriers to learning; and

(f) Be measured on the proportion of students who make a successful transition to work, post-secondary education, and the military.

The six learning goals under (b) were further refined into 75 "learner outcomes" adopted by the State Board for Elementary and Secondary Education. The outcomes emphasize core concepts in the basic disciplines, critical thinking, problem solving, and application of skills to real-life situations. In response to criticisms that the outcomes were unclear, the Board revised them and adopted into regulation 57 "academic expectations" (see Appendix II) that replaced the outcomes under goals 1, 2, 5, and 6. The outcomes listed under goals 3 and 4 (self-sufficiency and responsible group membership) were eliminated because the 1994 General Assembly, in response to pressure from groups who feared the state was teaching and testing values, passed legislation that prohibited the state from testing students on goals 3 and 4. The goals themselves, however, are still in effect.

KERA also mandated that the state department of education design a model curriculum framework that addressed KERA goals, outcomes, and assessment strategies in order to provide direction to districts in developing curricula. This model framework was disseminated to districts in the summer of 1993.

Assessment and Accountability

KERA mandated development of a performance-based assessment program to ensure school accountability for student achievement of the goals listed above (except goals 3 and 4), to be fully implemented no later than 1995-96. The assessment program, known as KIRIS, contains two major "strands": accountability assessment and continuous assessment. All schools must participate in the accountability strand, which is a formal test designed by the state assessment contractor and containing three components. The continuous assessment is voluntary and consists of formal and informal components. The formal component is designed by the state assessment contractor and is meant to give students at the "nonaccountable" grade levels practice

in the types of activities required by the accountability strand. The informal component consists of assessments designed by teachers as part of the daily instructional program (Kifer, 1994).

Under the accountability strand, students in Grades 4, 8, and 12 participated in an interim assessment during the 1991-92 school year. This assessment, which consisted of writing portfolios, a "transitional" test containing multiple-choice and open-response questions, and performance events, was meant to serve as a bridge between the old standardized test and a strictly performance-based assessment which was still being developed. Student data on these tests are reported by four performance categories, defined by the Kentucky Department of Education (1994) in an informational brochure as follows:

Distinguished: "At this highest level, the student has deep understanding of the concept or process and can complete all important parts of the task. The student can communicate well, think concretely and abstractly, and analyze and interpret data."

Proficient: "The student understands the major concepts, can do almost all of the task, and can communicate concepts clearly."

Apprentice: "The student has gained more understanding and can do some important parts of the task."

Novice: "The student is beginning to show an understanding of new information or skills."

Results of the interim assessment, along with measurement of the noncognitive factors listed above (c-f), were used to establish a baseline "accountability index" for all schools in the state. The baseline was used to set an incrementally increased "threshold" or goal score that each school was required to meet by the 1993-94 school year in order to obtain rewards or avoid sanctions (although the 1994 legislature delayed the most severe sanctions for two years).

Students at the "accountable" grade levels (4, 8, and 12) were assessed in 1992-93 and again in 1993-94. Scores from both years, along with measurement of noncognitive factors, will be averaged to determine if schools have reached their thresholds. This average score will be combined with new test data to serve as a new baseline from which a new threshold will be computed for schools to achieve by 1995-96. The process then repeats itself; I. e., a school accountability index will be determined biennially and schools will be expected to show improvement over their baseline scores.

Schools that score above their thresholds by one or more points and that move an average of at least 10 percent of their "novices" across the cognitive areas to "apprentice" or higher will receive financial rewards. Schools scoring above their baselines but not achieving the threshold must develop school improvement plans and are eligible for school improvement funds. Schools

that fall below their baselines by less than five points must develop school improvement plans, are eligible for school improvement funds, and will be assigned a Distinguished Educator to assist with school improvement.

Schools that fall below their baselines by five points or more are declared "schools in crisis"—but this sanction has been delayed until the 1995-96 school year. Once it is imposed, however, certified staff will be placed on probation, students given the right to transfer to the nearest "successful" school, and a "Distinguished Educator" placed in charge. After six months at the school, the Educator will make a recommendation to the superintendent about the retention, dismissal, or transfer of each certified employee. These recommendations are binding on the superintendent. Schools in crisis must also develop school improvement plans and are eligible for school improvement funds.

With the delay of the "schools in crisis" component of the accountability system, Distinguished Educators for the next two years will not have the broad authority set forth in the original statute, but will mostly serve as advisors to "schools in decline." (Information from this section was obtained from: Kentucky Department of Education, 1992; Kentucky Department of Education, July 6-8, 1993; Kentucky Department of Education, April 27, 1994; Partnership for Kentucky School Reform, 1993.)

Instruction and Assessment in Grades 4-8

Summary of Major Findings

In 1992-93, we found that instructional and assessment changes had occurred in almost every primary classroom we visited. In 1993-94, we wanted to know how much instructional change, if any, had occurred in the upper grades. In these grades, KERA is designed to be assessment-driven. For this reason, we looked at two grades that participate in the accountability component of the KIRIS (Grades 4 and 8). In these "accountable" grades, one might expect teachers to change their instructional strategies to prepare students for the test. To see if similar changes were occurring elsewhere in the upper-elementary grades, we looked at one non-accountable grade (Grade 5).

Major findings for the four study districts are as follows:

(1) For most teachers, the state assessment program—which emphasizes portfolios and open-response questions—appeared to be the driving force behind their instructional changes.

(2) The major change at both accountable and nonaccountable grade levels was an increased emphasis on writing and the writing process. At the 13 schools we

studied, we saw and heard about writing activities that required students to think and create. Interviews with teachers, principals, and students indicated this emphasis on writing was in most cases relatively new.

(3) Teachers had mixed reactions to the increased emphasis on writing. Generally, teachers who received the most training on writing and portfolios were more enthusiastic than those who had not. The most common remarks, in decreasing order of frequency, were as follows:

— Portfolios are time-consuming and burdensome.

— Students are burned out on writing and portfolios.

— Time spent on portfolios takes time away from teaching other skills.

— Students' writing and thinking skills have improved tremendously.

— Portfolios are an asset to the classroom and worth the extra effort.

— Portfolio standards are too high for most children to attain.

(4) Although the only across-the-board instructional change in the upper-elementary grades appeared to be the emphasis on writing, we saw and heard about a wide spectrum of other instructional strategies. These included both traditional and non-traditional uses of textbooks and worksheets, group work, hands-on activities, and the use of authentic literature to teach reading.

(5) Although KERA holds entire schools responsible for student achievement, we saw few effective efforts to plan and implement instructional changes on a schoolwide basis. Such efforts were underway to varying degrees at most schools, but only one school appeared to have implemented a cohesive curriculum and instructional plan schoolwide.

Methodology

In 1993-94, we added to our existing database on instruction and assessment in the upper-elementary grades by interviewing 64 people in 13 schools in the four districts: all 13 principals, 37 teachers, and 14 eighth-grade students. We also observed 73 teachers working with students in the fourth, fifth, and eighth grades (some combined classes also included sixth-grade students). In addition, data on schoolwide plans (or lack of plans) for improvements in instruction and assessment in the intermediate grades were obtained at SBDM council meetings, which we

attended semi-regularly at the seven schools that were implementing SBDM. We included questions about changes in instruction in all interviews.

We focused on Grades 4, 5, and 8 in order to study the effects of KERA on accountable and non-accountable grades. At the fourth- and fifth-grade levels, we spent a full instructional day conducting interviews and classroom observations in half of all elementary schools in each district: the school located in each district's major population center, along with others located in outlying communities. At each school, we observed two fourth-grade and two fifth-grade teachers, each for at least two 15-minute blocks. We attempted to select teachers at each grade level with contrasting teaching styles. The selection was made on the basis of our prior knowledge of teaching styles, walk-by observations prior to selecting teachers, or principals' recommendations. In many cases, schools had only one or two teachers at each grade level. At each school, we also interviewed the principal, one of the observed fourth-grade teachers, and one of the observed fifth-grade teachers.

At the eighth-grade level, we observed two schools in each district: one centrally located and one outlying school. At each school, we randomly selected an eighth-grade student on the morning of our visit and shadowed that student for the entire instructional day. Based on these observations, we selected two teachers with contrasting teaching styles to interview. We also interviewed the student who was shadowed, as well as the principal at each school. Additional students were interviewed at some schools, if time and circumstances permitted. In one district, only one elementary and one middle school were observed, since that district has only one school at each level.

We supplemented these efforts with interviews, observations, and reviews of state-level documents since 1991-92. During this time, we regularly attended meetings of the state board of education, observed two training sessions on the assessment program provided by the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE), and reviewed a large number of documents issued by the department and others at the state level. We have also periodically interviewed KDE staff members.

Limitations of the Research

Interviews provided a major source of data about changes in instruction and the degree to which KERA influenced those changes in the upper-elementary grades. Classroom observations supplemented what we learned in the interviews and served as a useful check on the interviews. Our one-day observations, however, do not necessarily reflect what occurred in those classrooms throughout the year.

What we saw was influenced by the time of day, day of the week, time of year, and sheer chance. Classrooms observed shortly before the KIRIS testing may have been spending more time than usual practicing responding to open-ended questions, while classrooms observed after

portfolios were completed may have spent less time on writing. Some of the differences between grade levels may have been due to the fact that we observed eighth-grade classes during the spring and fourth- and fifth-grade classes during the fall.

We have been careful to report simply what we observed and to avoid generalizing our findings without proper evidence. It should also be noted that these findings cannot be generalized to the entire state.

Expected Instruction and Assessment Changes

Like most measurement-driven reforms (see Nobel & Smith, 1994), KERA does not specify what teachers are to do to help students achieve education goals. Therefore, we faced the same question that plagues many teachers: What sort of instruction should be occurring in upper-elementary classrooms in response to KERA? In order to find an answer, we consulted several sources: a representative of the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE), the law itself, and the state model curriculum framework.

The KDE official said that the driving force behind all instruction should be the goal of helping all children achieve at high levels. KERA states at least three times that schools are to expect a high level of achievement of all students. The introductory section, KRS 158.645, states that the legislature's intent in passing KERA is to create a system of public education that will allow ***all*** students to acquire specified capacities. KRS 158.6451, which identifies KERA goals, requires that schools expect a high level of achievement of ***all*** students. KRS 158.6455, which defines the accountability measures, states that the legislature intends for schools to succeed with ***all*** students (Kentucky Department of Education, 1992).

The KDE representative also said it is up to teachers to determine how to help all students achieve KERA goals. He rejected the notion that the state "should be in the business of telling people how they should teach." He asserted:

> What we think educators should be doing is using the craft and research knowledge that's already out there. The Department, content-area professional associations, professional development organizations, colleges and universities, and other partners need to facilitate teacher access to existing knowledge about effective instructional practices, both old and new. However, teachers must decide what strategies are most appropriate for their students.

The nature of KERA goals and academic expectations provides some direction to teachers. The goals and expectations focus strongly on communication, core concepts in the disciplines, real-life application of skills, critical thinking, problem solving, and integration of knowledge from all subject areas.

The state curriculum framework suggests numerous strategies for teaching to KERA goals, with a heavy emphasis on activities that require students to think, plan, design, research, and present. Hands-on activities, group work, applications across the curriculum, and community-based instruction are also stressed. All activities and strategies in the framework are strongly grounded in real-life application of skills (Kentucky Department of Education, 1993).

Given these guidelines, one would expect to see teachers teaching skills and concepts in real-life contexts rather than in isolation, and engaging students in thinking and problem solving. Teachers would also work together both within and across disciplines to teach skills and concepts in an integrated way.

Major Findings

Our observations and interviews indicate that instructional approaches at the intermediate elementary level (grades 4 and 5) did not differ dramatically from those of the middle school level (grade 8). In addition, instructional approaches differed dramatically between accountable and nonaccountable grade levels in only one school. For these reasons, the findings for all grade levels are merged in the following sections, with differences between grade levels noted where appropriate.

It appeared that one major assessment-driven change had occurred at every school we visited: increased emphasis on writing caused by portfolio assessment and the use of open-response questions on the assessment. Beyond this, we saw and heard about a wide variety of instructional practices, some of which appeared to be KERA- or assessment-driven, and others which did not. The limited nature of our observations precludes an in-depth analysis of whether teachers were teaching in ways that would help students achieve KERA goals. Therefore, we simply describe what we observed, adding analysis only where sufficient data are available.

In the sections that follow, we describe the various kinds of instructional approaches we observed, listed in decreasing order of frequency. Frequency was determined by combining the number of times we observed a particular approach with the number of times a teacher or student reported use of the approach. When a teacher both reported and was observed using an approach, this was only counted once.

Textbooks. We saw or heard about textbooks being used in about 65 percent of the classrooms we visited. We actually saw textbooks being used by more than half of all teachers—much more often than we observed any other instructional practice. The use of textbooks appeared most prevalent in the eighth grade, where about three-fourths of all teachers were using textbooks or were reported to use them. At the fourth- and fifth-grade level, just over half of all teachers used or reported using textbooks.

In some classes, textbooks were used more as resources than as the sole dispensers of knowledge. For instance, teachers might teach a lesson through demonstration or hands-on activities and then assign related homework from the textbook. Some teachers reported pulling only the material they needed from the textbook rather than working through the book in a chronological and systematic way.

In other classes, students took turns reading aloud from textbooks, or searched for factual answers to worksheets or questions at the end of the chapter. The emphasis in these classrooms appeared to be on obtaining the correct answers from the text rather than using the information or applying it to real-life situations.

Increased emphasis on writing. The second most common instructional strategy was the use of writing activities. Reports of increased writing were heard at nearly all schools, and writing activities were observed directly at many sites. We found students writing in over one-third of all classrooms visited. Many teachers and students reported that writing was a frequent activity in their classrooms. We also saw displays of student writing on classroom or hallway bulletin boards at several schools. When interview and observational data were combined, about 60 percent of all teachers reported or were observed using writing as an instructional activity.

Not only were students doing more writing, but the nature of writing activities also appeared to support KERA goals. Rather than filling in the blanks or copying answers from books, students were often given writing assignments that required them to create their own compositions. We saw or heard about students writing essays, responding to open-ended questions, writing in journals, and composing poems, short stories, letters, and persuasive papers. Many assignments required students to think, analyze information, create answers, and use information for decision-making and evaluation.

Steps in the writing process were posted in many classrooms, and it appeared that most students were being taught to use these processes in their writing. We saw instances of teachers leading pre-writing discussions and of students writing first drafts of portfolio assignments, working in small groups or with partners to revise drafts of writing assignments, and revising short stories based on teacher input.

At the same time, we observed a range of approaches to teaching writing, some of which appeared to engage students and elicit creativity and others which appeared programmed and perfunctory. In a fourth-grade class just prior to Christmas, for example, the teacher led a pre-writing activity in which she encouraged students to share aloud their memories of Christmas. She encouraged and reinforced the use of detail as students told their stories. There were lots of laughing and enthusiasm as students shared their memories with one another. Students appeared excited and ready to write by the time the teacher asked them to write a personal narrative about a past Christmas. In contrast, another fourth-grade teacher led a pre-writing activity on the same topic by listing questions about Christmas on the board. Students copied the questions and wrote their answers quietly and with little interaction among themselves for 15-20 minutes.

Writing activities and portfolios served as a tool for curriculum integration at many schools when teachers from various subject areas assigned writing tasks. For instance, eighth-graders at one school were observed working on a math portfolio assignment in social studies class. Using a map of the Lewis & Clark expedition, students computed the distance traveled, determined the average number of miles traveled per day, and determined how long the trip would take in a car traveling 55 miles per hour. At another school, an eighth-grade science class completed a math portfolio assignment in which they estimated the cost of repairing storm damage to the gymnasium.

Teachers' reactions to the increased emphasis on writing brought on by portfolios were mixed. The most common issue raised—even by teachers who valued portfolios—was the burdensome nature of portfolios. Many teachers said they had little time for anything besides portfolios and that they were under enormous pressure to bring up student scores. Fourth-grade teachers were especially overburdened because they were often responsible for both math and writing portfolios. At one school, two of the three teachers who taught fourth grade in 1992-93 switched to fifth grade to escape the pressure of portfolios and accountability. (In response to a directive from the 1994 legislature to alleviate the burden on teachers at the accountable grade levels, the state department of education moved the math portfolio to Grade 5 and the high school transitional test and performance events to Grade 11.)

While teachers generally agreed that portfolios were burdensome, a few reported that their load was reduced as they learned to incorporate portfolios into the classroom. An eighth-grade math teacher explained:

> Portfolios...consume so much of your time inside and outside of your class. You've got to give the kids opportunities in class to do the assignments.... That's why I re-arranged a lot of my assessments. If I can make a portfolio my outcome, then I'm killing two birds with one stone.... I'm using that as my assessment of the kids but, in turn, I'm getting a good quality portfolio piece.... Last year I didn't do that—I didn't know to.

Many of the teachers who felt portfolios and writing were being overemphasized said that students had become burned out on writing. Among eighth-grade students, however, the majority who mentioned portfolios said they enjoyed and had learned from writing and math portfolio activities. An eighth-grade student commented that he enjoys writing, but not the pre-writing process he is required to go through:

> I like writing the poems and short stories and personal narratives and defensive position, because I can come up with an excuse for anything.... I like the writing, but it's just I don't like the processes you have to go through because I feel like I can write it just off the top of my head. I cannot just list things off. I don't like that part.

An eighth-grade student in a different district identified math as one of the subjects in which she is learning the most, and attributed this partially to math portfolios:

> We learn more out of portfolios, I think, because it shows us how to work out more problems instead of taking the easy way out and just working it in our heads. We have to write it out on paper. [Math portfolios] helped me out a lot this year. Last year, I didn't really do math well, but this year I'm doing better. I understand it more.

A fourth-grade teacher said that student attitudes toward writing are strongly influenced by the teacher's attitude:

> Kids will move in this county from one town to another. They will tell you how they hate portfolios, but that's a ***learned*** response from a negative person—maybe not just the teacher, maybe the principal, maybe the home, but it is a learned response. If you teach it correctly, then the children will love to write.

A principal's description of an eighth-grade teacher in his building illustrates the importance he placed on the teacher's attitude toward portfolios and writing:

> The kids love her. They come in the mornings and write for her. Students who don't do another blooming thing, who end up in these referrals, never come in [the office on] a referral from her.... Some of the worst disciplinary kids I've got have the best portfolios I've ever seen.

Another common fear expressed by some teachers in every district was that the time spent on writing and portfolios would result in students not learning "the basics." Slightly more fourth-grade than eighth-grade teachers expressed this fear. While some of these teachers were aware that basic skills could be taught in the context of teaching writing, they were not sure that students would actually learn these skills without some drill or other type of rote practice. Some teachers reported that they had actually seen signs of students not learning basic skills, but most were simply fearful that this might be an outcome of the time spent on portfolios. For example, a fourth-grade teacher expressed fear in December that her students were not learning the basics; at the end of the school year she reported that her fears had been unfounded.

The number of teachers who complained that portfolios were taking away from basic skills was about the same as the number who said the increased emphasis on writing had resulted in great improvement in students' writing and thinking abilities. These teachers spoke enthusiastically about portfolios and said they were worth the extra effort. Interestingly, these teachers were often "cluster leaders" for their districts—teachers who received regional and state-level training and information on portfolios, which they passed along to colleagues. An eighth-grade writing portfolio cluster leader explained why she had become a portfolio enthusiast:

> For years we have been so concerned with [teaching] English in parts. You did a unit and then you went to another one and you never brought it all together. Somehow the kids never understood, "Why am I doing this?" So to me, actually seeing that they can communicate and use these skills is great.

Another portfolio cluster leader spoke of the need for ***all*** teachers to be trained in the writing process:

> We had teachers who did not even know what the writing process was, and they're supposed to be working on the writing process? We should have been trained on every aspect before we were asked to implement it.... I think if teachers were better trained, the stress level would not be at the level that it is.

A few teachers in all four districts at both the fourth- and eighth-grade level said portfolio standards were too high for most children to attain. A fourth-grade teacher remarked:

> Years ago in the fourth grade, we were doing real well if we had a main idea sentence, several detail sentences that supported the main idea sentence, and a good closing sentence, and a title that related to that. Nowadays, that's not good enough, that's not nearly good enough. And we couldn't even do that years ago, so how in the world are we supposed to do two- and three-page reports today? They're asking a lot of skills, in my opinion, that fourth-graders don't have.

Group work. We saw or heard about students working semi-independently in pairs or groups on projects or tasks assigned by teachers in about half of the classrooms visited. The prevalence of group work did not differ much between fourth-, fifth-, and eighth-grade classrooms or across subject areas at the eighth-grade level. At the fourth- and fifth-grade level, however, we observed more group work during math instruction than in any other subject area.

At one school, fourth-grade students in one class worked in small groups to compose mathematics story problems, solve them, and explain the process. Fifth-graders in a nearby class worked in small groups to study the use of light in various types of technology. Fourth-trate ways of creating electrical circuits. Fifth- and sixth-graders in another district worked in pairs to research and create a pre-independence timeline of American history. In an eighth-grade English class, students were observed taking group tests on parts of speech. Each group took a passage from a magazine and categorized all the words by their parts of speech.

The extent to which group tasks actually required cooperative effort varied considerably from one class to the next. In one eighth-grade class, for example, students were divided into groups and all students were given an identical worksheet. They were told to work together to complete the worksheet. Some groups did but others did not. In checking the worksheets, the teacher called on individuals rather than groups to give their answers.

Hands-on activities. We observed or heard about hands-on activities in slightly less than half of all classrooms visited. Hands-on activities appeared to be most common in math classrooms at the fourth- and fifth-grade level and in science classrooms at the eighth-grade level.

An example of a math lesson using manipulatives occurred in a fourth-grade classroom in which students were learning about geometrical shapes. Students cut various shapes out of construction paper, manipulated these shapes to plan a quilt design, and then drew their designs on graph paper. In an eighth-grade classroom, students used bicycles with various sizes of wheels to calculate how fast the bicycles would go with wheels of various diameters.

In general, we did not observe or hear much about science instruction at the fourth- and fifth-grade level, but the few science lessons we observed employed hands-on materials and/or worksheets more often than textbooks. For instance, fourth-graders at one school worked in groups to demonstrate ways to create electrical circuits using batteries and steel wool filaments. Fifth-graders in another district dissected owl pellets and glued the skeletons found within onto poster board. In a fifth/sixth-grade class in another district, students worked in groups of three to combine household chemicals and write about the results on a worksheet.

At the eighth-grade level, we heard more reports about the use of hands-on materials than we observed directly. It appeared that eighth-grade science teachers occasionally engaged students in hands-on experiments, but mostly relied on demonstrations, textbooks, and worksheets. Some teachers reported that the lack of adequate lab facilities and supplies made it difficult to perform experiments regularly.

Worksheets. The use of worksheets was observed or reported in just over one-third of all classrooms visited, and it cut across grade levels and subject areas. Some teachers used worksheets for homework or to supplement instruction delivered through other means, while others used worksheets to guide students through activities such as group problem-solving or hands-on assignments.

Teacher lecture. Teacher lecture as an instructional technique was observed or reported in about one-third of all classrooms visited, and appeared slightly more prevalent at the eighth-grade level and in the teaching of social studies at all levels. On the days we observed, lectures were typically not used for an entire lesson and often led into other activities. Some lectures appeared to engage students, while others did not.

Authentic literature. We observed or heard from teachers in all four districts who employed "authentic literature"—such as newspapers, paperback books, and magazines—to teach reading. The use of authentic literature appeared to be more common among fourth- and fifth-grade teachers than among eighth-grade teachers. It appeared that fourth- and fifth-grade teachers used authentic literature at least as much as they used basal readers. Many readers, however, contained authentic stories rather than the "See Jane run" stories of the past. A few

fourth-grade and fifth-grade teachers reported or appeared to be using authentic literature as their primary instructional resource for teaching reading. A veteran teacher who used basals for over 20 years before switching to paperback books expressed her enthusiasm for the new approach:

> I've never in all the years of my teaching—and it's been several—had children reading like they do now; never, never. I started this program last year. I don't use the basal any more; it's on the shelf.... The way we were told to teach [before], you go by the manuals. We would read one day a week; the rest of the week we spent on skills. But that wasn't teaching them to love to read. [Now] I hear them discussing authors: "Have you read a book by so-and-so?" I just beamed. I hear parents say, "I go in their room and the kid's reading a book!" Wonder of wonders! I've never had anything I feel more content with.

At the eighth-grade level, use of a literature textbook appeared to be more common than use of paperback books. The textbook employed by the eighth-grade teachers we observed contained authentic literature in the form of short stories, poems, and abridged novels. Even so, some eighth-grade students said they would prefer to choose their own literature. One student commented:

> We read dull, dumb stories. Them reading stories just get to me, I can't relate to them. That's something I can't cope with because I don't even like to read stories like that. The only time that we do anything that's fun in there is go to the library and pick out the books that we like.

Instructional technology. The use of instructional technology did not appear to be widespread. Overall, fewer than 20 percent of all teachers we observed used or reported using instructional technology regularly. Classroom computers were prevalent in only one district—Vanderbilt County—where each elementary classroom had five computers. In the other three districts, computers were only available in computer labs or through teachers' own fund-raising efforts.

At the outlying schools in Vanderbilt County where class sizes were relatively small, computers were in almost constant use on the days we visited. Younger students worked with a program to teach keyboarding skills, while older students mostly used the word processor to type portfolio entries. At the two centrally located schools in the district, however, students did not use the computers at all on the days we visited, nor did the teachers report using computers. Eighth-grade students at one of these schools reported that they seldom used computers.

Factors that appeared to facilitate the use of computers in Vanderbilt County were small class sizes and nondepartmentalized classrooms. Teachers at one school where Grades 5 and 6 were departmentalized reported that students used the computers more before teachers departmentalized, because students stayed in the same classroom and time on the computers could be worked in during the day. Departmentalization, however, made for short class periods

and students moved between rooms, so teachers had trouble working computer time into the schedule. At a smaller school with departmentalization at the sixth-eighth grade levels, however, teachers worked out ways for students to spend time on the computers by allowing them to move about the school independently and use any available computers in any teacher's classroom or the school library.

Schoolwide Attempts at Instructional Change

The KERA accountability program recognizes the school as the unit of measure, and also holds districts accountable. Therefore, one might expect to see districts and schools working together to implement instructional approaches compatible with KERA. In fact, for the past two years the state department of education has strongly encouraged schools to develop a "school transformation plan," which lays out specific plans for helping students achieve KERA goals.

In spite of the accountability program and the push for school transformation plans, we found that the level of instructional programming aimed at achieving KERA goals varied within districts and even within schools. While most of the schools in our study had developed school transformation plans, the cohesiveness and outcomes of these efforts varied widely from one school to the next.

Of the 13 schools we studied in Grades 4-8, only one appeared to have undertaken a strong, cohesive, school-wide attempt at change that carried over into most classrooms. The school-based decision making (SBDM) council at this school developed the school transformation plan, which was being implemented school-wide. Frequent reports on implementation of the transformation plan were heard at council meetings. Of the nine teachers of Grades 4, 5, and 8 observed, eight employed instructional practices that appeared to be designed to help students achieve KERA goals.

The strong leadership and encouragement of the principal likely played a role in the schoolwide effort. This school had begun implementing changes even prior to KERA. When KERA passed, the principal was enthusiastic about SBDM. She has carefully routed all key decisions through the council since then. Largely because of her efforts, the school has used SBDM as a vehicle to organize itself to implement KERA. Interviews with the principal have revealed a solid understanding of KERA goals and expectations, and she has encouraged her faculty from the start to change in ways that will assist students in achieving goals. She has also made sure that her faculty takes advantage of the many professional development opportunities made available by the district.

At the remaining 12 schools, there appeared to be various levels of schoolwide effort at instructional change and various results. A relatively strong effort led by principals was underway at a few schools, but these efforts did not always carry over into all (or even most) classrooms. For example, the principal at one school required that all teachers include open-

response questions on their tests. He sent two teachers to visit a school that performed well on the state assessment, and he and the teachers devised a plan for teachers from different subject areas to engage their students in writing activities each Wednesday. These directives from the principal, however, appeared to be resented by some teachers and ignored by others. One teacher administered a test on the day we observed that contained no open-response questions. Another returned a test to students that contained an open-response question, and explained to us that the principal required such questions. She said that including open-response questions on all tests amounted to "programming" students.

At another school, the schoolwide effort was less top-down but still spearheaded by the principal. The principal organized school improvement meetings for various interest groups: teachers at each grade level, parents, the SBDM council, custodians, secretaries, instructional assistants, bus drivers, and lunchroom workers. Each group listed the school's strengths and weaknesses and made suggestions for improvement. These lists were given to the council and plans were made for improvement in some areas. Occasional meetings were also held in which teachers visited one another's classrooms to learn about instructional approaches their colleagues were using. The school transformation plan required teachers to implement a minimum number of various instructional approaches aimed at helping students achieve KERA goals. In spite of this strong effort, however, changes have come slowly to some of the veteran faculty members. Classroom observations suggest that, beyond meeting the minimum requirements of the school transformation plan, the amount of instructional change varied widely from one teacher to the next.

At a majority of schools, the level of schoolwide planning appeared to be minimal and teachers mostly did what they wanted. Faculty at most of these schools had developed school transformation plans, but we saw little overt use of the plans. In fact, when we asked some teachers if they were implementing the transformation plan, they were unsure what it was. Some teachers appeared to be using instructional practices designed to achieve KERA goals, while others did not. These schools differed in terms of the type of instructional leadership provided by principals. Some schools were led by principals who appeared to be weak instructional leaders, but others had strong principals who chose not to try to force changes. None of the principals, however, appeared to have accepted the KERA philosophy and approach to the same extent as did the few principals who were leading strong efforts at change.

Motivations for Change

In an earlier section of this report, we suggested several factors that might guide teachers in Grades 4-8 in choosing their curricula and instructional methods: the requirement that schools must expect a high level of achievement of all students, the nature of KERA goals and expectations, the state curriculum framework, and the assessment program. It appears that the assessment program played the strongest role in guiding teachers' actions, followed by KERA

goals and expectations. The curriculum framework was just beginning to be used at some schools. The requirement of expecting all children to learn did not appear to be a guiding force.

Assessment-driven reform. For the majority of teachers we observed and spoke to, the new assessment program appeared to be the driving force behind their instructional choices. This was true in accountable and nonaccountable grades, although teachers in the non-accountable grades said they felt less pressure from the assessment program than did their counterparts in the accountable grades. The strong emphasis on writing in fourth-eighth grade classrooms appeared, in most cases, to have been sparked by the need to prepare students for the assessment. Many of the writing activities we saw or heard about were portfolio assignments or writing in response to open-response questions similar to the ones on the assessment. Of the teachers we spoke to, a majority indicated that they were engaging students in writing activities in an effort to improve assessment scores, or because it was required. Only a few teachers said writing had always been a major part of their curriculum.

KERA goals and expectations. We saw and heard evidence that some teachers designed at least part of their instruction around KERA goals and expectations. In addition to writing activities, we saw some teachers incorporating group work, hands-on activities, and authentic literature in their lessons. Several teachers reported using these activities because these are the kinds of activities required by KERA.

Curriculum framework. The state curriculum framework had not begun to play a major role at the schools we visited in 1993-94, although this may change in the near future. The framework is a relatively recent resource, and teachers at some schools were just receiving professional development on how to use it. At other schools, teachers had begun the process of curriculum alignment using the framework.

Expecting high levels of achievement from all students. Usually, we did not ask educators directly if they believed that all children can learn at high levels, but a few people offered their opinions. Most of the teachers and principals who addressed the issue said they did not believe all children can learn at high levels. One principal used an analogy to illustrate his point: a 12-ounce cup will never hold as much as a 16-ounce cup, no matter how much water is poured in. Some teachers felt that not all children are capable of scoring at the proficient level on the state assessment.

While few educators told us that they ***did*** believe that all children can learn at high levels or that achieving this goal was the motivation behind their instruction, it appeared that the assessment-driven instructional changes teachers had made were convincing some educators that high performance was possible for nearly all students. An elementary school principal remarked:

> We anticipate the movement from "novice" to "apprentice" [at our school] to be about 25 percent; the state asks for 10.... We already feel we have five "distinguished" portfolios in the eighth grade.... I looked at one piece that was 17

> pages in length... This is amazing to me...the way we have allowed these minds not to expand out.... This is the one thing I think we mention every meeting we have: "Don't forget to expand your expectations of children." The more we see those results, the more we can expand our expectations.

An eighth-grade teacher described how one of her students had progressed through working on portfolios:

> I had a kid last year who couldn't write a sentence...not "The dog bit," nothing.... I read a short story in his portfolio the other day and it was almost five pages long. In his letter to the reviewer he said, "I never thought I would be able to do this." I look at him and I think, "What if all I had stressed had been grammar skills and punctuation skills but he had never transferred that?" I can tell you he would have failed. He has failed before. He's 16 years old and in the 8th grade.... Last year he was the slowest kid I had, and I thought, "I'll never get a portfolio out of him." We had no problem. He's the first one to hand his portfolio in. But I know if I give him anything where he has to have rote memorization, he won't pass it.

We also saw evidence that even teachers who did not profess a belief that all children were capable of learning at high levels were pushing all to do so because of the accountability measures. One teacher commented:

> I've always felt like I had enough experience with children to know which ones to push, which ones to encourage, which ones to say, "I can't accept this." Now I have to push every one of them because it's not that they're accountable, I'm accountable. I have to. I have to feel that I have to do that anyway.

KERA Accountability Measures

Summary of Major Findings

Local responses to the assessment results were immediate and emotional. Nearly all educators with whom we spoke, for a variety of reasons, expressed concern about using the assessment for accountability purposes. As described in the preceding section, we found evidence that the accountability measures were having the desired effect of forcing instructional changes and providing an incentive for schools to try to meet the needs of all students. At the same time, we saw signs of some unintended effects of the accountability measures.

We observed three basic responses to the assessment results: (1) productive responses (schools where staff took some responsibility for the results and developed plans for improving scores); (2) nonproductive responses (schools where staff denied responsibility for the results and

made no improvement plans); and (3) nonresponses (schools that took pride in results but made no plans for maintaining or improving them). Most of the staff consulted in a given school usually had the same sort of response.

Methodology

During the 1993-94 school year, results of the 1992-93 state assessment were released. These results provided an indication of what sort of progress, if any, schools had made toward reaching the 1993-94 threshold set by the state. While our 1993-94 research plan did not include activities specifically designed to gather information on how the accountability measures were affecting schools, the reaction to the release of 1992-93 assessment results was so strong that we gathered information on this topic during the course of conducting routine interviews and observations. Table5 lists all research activities that yielded data on the accountability measures.

Major Findings

Educators in all four districts expressed concern and fear about the accountability aspect of the assessment system. Their focus on the accountability measures overshadowed any feelings they may have had about the relative merits of a performance-based assessment system. Four dominant concerns were expressed (in decreasing order of frequency): (1) a judgment about school improvement should not be based on a comparison of different groups (or "cohorts") of students, (2) the assessment system is not a valid measure of a school's success in educating students, (3) the threat of sanctions places too much pressure on teachers at the accountable grade levels, and (4) students may not do their best on the assessment because they are not held accountable for their performance.

Comparing different cohorts of students. Educators in all four districts expressed concern about comparing different cohorts of students to determine if schools had improved in the proportion of successful students from one biennium to the next. Most educators who addressed this issue felt it was unfair to base rewards and sanctions on a comparison of scores between two groups because some groups are inherently more capable than others. One teacher commented:

> I predict that every school in Kentucky will eventually be a school in crisis if you go by that criteria, because there are just years you say, "Well that third grade this year, every one of them is low."

In addition, a few educators based their objections on the belief that assessment should document growth by comparing a child's prior performance with that same child's later performance.

Table 5

Number of Research Activities on Accountability, 1993-94

	Lamont	Newtown	Orange	Vanderbilt	TOTAL
Interviews/ conversations					
Superintendents	0	1	0	1	2
Other central office staff	1	0	2	1	4
Principals	3	2	4	5	14
Asst. principals	0	0	0	1	1
Counselors	1	0	0	1	2
School-based KERA coordinator	NA	NA	1	NA	1
Teachers	15	6	13	15	49
Parents	4	0	0	3	7
Students	2	0	1	7	10
Observations					
Classroom observations of KIRIS-related activities	10	3	5	8	26
SBDM council meetings	5	2	5	10	22
School board meetings	1	1	2	1	5
Principals' meeting	1	0	0	0	1
Faculty meeting	1	0	0	0	1
PTO meeting	0	0	0	1	1
Staff dinner	0	0	1	0	1
KERA assessment program for parents	0	0	0	1	1
Portfolio training	0	0	1	0	1
Document Review					
Local news articles	0	2	0	10	12
SBDM council minutes	0	0	0	2	2
School board minutes	0	0	0	1	1
Student portfolios	0	0	2	0	2
School improvement brainstorming charts	NA	NA	NA	1	1
KIRIS results	1	1	1	1	4

Assessment validity. Many educators in all four districts were not confident that the assessment provides a valid measure of a school's success in educating students, and were concerned that rewards and sanctions will be imposed based on an unproven instrument. In addition, there was great concern that the scoring of the test is highly subjective, thus making the assessment invalid for use in an accountability system which has such high stakes. A teacher commented:

> They want us to improve because they want to show the world that Kentucky is wonderful and we're improving and how much better we're getting. But these are people's opinions. There's nothing valid about this.

Stress and anger created by threat of sanctions. After the first round of assessment results was released in the fall of 1993, we perceived a general heightening of the level of stress and tension among educators as the threat of sanctions loomed on the horizon. This was evident even at schools where students had performed well, because teachers were not sure they could maintain this level of performance. The threat of sanctions generally seemed to have a demoralizing effect on teachers, especially those who felt they had worked very hard to improve student achievement, only to discover that scores had not improved as much as they had hoped. Two high school teachers at a school where scores fell below the baseline remarked:

> We are a pretty conscientious body, at least a lot of bodies in this body are conscientious. We really try to do a good job and we take pride in doing that...but [the KIRIS results] added a little [to the stress level] because of all the work we're doing and then we still did not meet that threshold.

A fourth-grade teacher in another district spoke of the pressure she faces:

> I'm sick for a week before it [the report on test results] comes out, and I'm sick after it comes out because I know it's going to be in the paper. I'm worried about what people will say. The pressure is terrible.

Another fourth-grade teacher remarked:

> I feel really bad about the pressure that's on myself and all the other teachers.... I wish that somehow or another we could back away from that pressure. Let the teachers have time to get in and develop programs before we start punishing people for not meeting a threshold, or start rewarding people for meeting a threshold. I really question how a school can really meet a threshold or meet some of these standards in such a short time.

Some teachers expressed anger that policy makers were trying to motivate teachers with the promise of rewards or the threat of sanctions. A junior high school teacher commented:

> A lot of this KERA stuff starts with the assumption that teachers are not to be trusted and don't really know what they're doing and must be told and made to do so—bad basic assumptions. It's like starting a relationship with, "Okay, you're a jerk, but if you measure up, you'll be okay."

An eighth-grade teacher in another district commented during a group interview:

> All of this rewards business is reinforcing one of the greatest things that's wrong with our society...greed [other teachers murmur in agreement].... I try to teach well because it's the right thing to do. I've got a young kid's mind in my hand! I can't trash that, and [pointing to her colleagues] you won't, you won't, you won't. You do it because it's right! I don't give a hoot if somebody's going to pay me $3,600.... That money isn't going to make the school better.... They're trying to run schools as a corporation, and it doesn't work. It doesn't work because you're dealing with children and you're dealing with growth and development and maturation. You can't deal with that as a business and have rewards and sanctions and stuff like that.... They forget the personal side that's attached—that you want these students to learn and you care about them.

Student accountability. Many educators expressed concern that because students are not held accountable for their performance on the assessment, they do not put forth their best effort. An elementary school principal said that eighth-grade students who were angry with him said th .y would retaliate by performing poorly on the assessment. Two teachers at a high school where 1992-93 scores fell below the baseline reacted bitterly to the results, saying that they were already doing everything they could to improve scores, and that the seniors did not do their best on the test because they had no stake in it. A fourth-grade teacher said:

> There is no student accountability. The kids know. You're supposed to read these instructions to the kids [before administering the assessment]: "The results will help us to find out how well our school is teaching you." That's the first day. Then every day before you give the test you read that these tests are designed to see what students in this school know and to help *us* improve our teaching. When twelfth graders hear that, it's like, "I don't care. It's on you, it's not on me."

An elementary principal remarked:

> Students need to be more accountable. I just don't believe you can hold a school accountable until you can hold individual students accountable and their parents. We have students only a part of the time.... For KERA to work, there's going to have to be more student and parent accountability.

Intended vs. Unintended Effects of the Accountability System

Intended effects. Guskey (1994) states that the high-stakes nature of the assessment program in Kentucky makes KERA an assessment-driven reform. He comments that the developers of KERA hoped that the performance-based assessment system would compel educators to focus instructional activities on the kinds of higher level skills inherent in KERA goals. The accountability system that is tied to the assessment program makes it likely that educators will try to shape their instruction in ways that help students do well on the assessment.

As reported in the preceding section on "Instruction and Assessment in Grades 4-8," we found that the assessment program had indeed produced changes in classroom instruction. Specifically, teachers were engaging students in a variety of writing activities, many of which required critical thinking and creativity. In addition, some teachers engaged students in group work, hands-on activities, and the use of authentic literature. While the extent of these changes varied widely from one classroom to the next, we saw evidence of increased writing everywhere.

We also saw evidence that the assessment and accountability program was driving teachers and schools to make a stronger effort to reach all students. We quoted a teacher in the preceding section who said that, because of the accountability measures, she felt she had to push all students whether she wanted to or not. At a school in another district, the unexpectedly high performance on KIRIS by an eighth-grade class perceived by teachers to be "slow" persuaded teachers that they had more influence over student achievement than they realized, and could expect more from "slow" students. A principal in another district, when asked if teachers would have changed their instruction and assessment techniques in the absence of the accountability measures, replied:

> I doubt it. It would be slower. I think you would have a hard time convincing some of them that they needed to do it. I don't like it...but it has caused teachers throughout the state to change the way they're teaching and to put more emphasis on writing and problems that are more applicable to everyday life. It has done that, and that's the one good thing, I guess, it has done. I still wonder about the validity of the test, but it has accomplished that, if that was the intent of it.

Unintended effects. As Haertel (1994) points out, a high-stakes accountability system can bring with it adverse consequences along with the more positive ones. Haertel notes specifically that children in Kentucky's nongraded primary program may be inappropriately retained in the program in order to prevent their participation in the fourth-grade assessment. He also predicts that principals may move their best teachers to the accountable grade levels, and that schools may divert resources from gifted and talented programs to those students who are at greater risk of failing.

In 1993-94, we saw and heard evidence of unintended side effects that resulted from the pressure imposed by accountability measures. Haertel predicted one such effect: a primary teacher in one district reported that the principal was forcing the teachers to retain a disproportionate number of students in the primary program to prevent them from being tested in the fourth grade. The principal agreed that this was the case, but said that these students would have likely been retained in the early grades in the absence of an ungraded primary program.

We heard other comments suggesting that the pressure to do well on the assessment was forcing teachers and principals to focus exclusively on that goal. For instance, a principal complained about the amount of time eighth-grade students devote to the band program and athletics:

> Like it or not, band's not going to do anything for us as far as us reaching our threshold. But we've got half of our eighth grade out today to a band camp when we need to be in our classrooms getting ready for our KERA testing.... Band directors and coaches don't see anything other than their little program. I told our basketball coach the other day, "I'm sorry, but your 18 wins a year in junior high school is not going to help me one darn bit to keep my job."

The same principal said that the extended school program, which is designed to assist students who need extra time to meet KERA goals, should be offered only to students who have the potential to move from the "novice" to the "apprentice" performance category. He felt the extended program was being wasted on students who, in his view, would never score higher than "novice."

An eighth-grade teacher in another district spoke of the temptation to focus her efforts only on students who are capable of advancing to the next performance category:

> I have kids who are novice students, and that's all they are ever going to be. But I worked probably harder with those novice students, and they worked as hard as any of the other levels to come up with their finished [portfolio] product...but yet, at the novice level, they only score zeroes. All they'll ever be are zeroes. On that score, we don't get any credit at all for the improvement that they made—and they made a lot of improvement, but they're just never going to be at that next level. I sometimes feel like, as a teacher, this kid is a novice, whatever I do with him isn't going to help that score. Just forget him, let me work with these. And I think that's going to happen to a lot of kids. There should be some way to measure the improvement that they have made.

Haertel (1994) identifies another possible adverse consequence of high-stakes assessment programs: that the test scores themselves become the goal of education. He states that "something is lost when teachers and students work for grades themselves instead of the intellectual attainments those grades are meant to represent" (p. 70). While the nature of the KERA

assessment program is such that scoring well should represent actual educational achievement, we did hear evidence suggesting that the pressure of the accountability program caused some teachers to focus more on assessment scores—and the resulting salvation or loss of their jobs—than on the welfare of their students. For example, a fourth-grade teacher with many years of experience reported that she was unable to teach students all the math basics they needed, because she felt compelled to spend an inordinate amount of time on writing in order to keep the school's scores up. Another fourth-grade teacher in the same district spoke of how her own concern about improving assessment results almost caused her to lose sight of student welfare:

> At the beginning of the year when I first got the test scores, I was really worried and I was trying to push. And then one day I talked to a mother [whose] husband had kicked her and five children out of their home. She was taking these children to different places every night to live. She and her daughter were living in a car. And I said, "I don't care what that child does on the test; I want him to know that I care about him. And I want him to know that school is a safe place for him to be." That put me back on track for knowing what the kids need.... I believe they all will do the best they can, but as for me putting the pressure on them to succeed, I'm not going to, and I'm going to try to stop putting it on myself. In the classroom, I'll do all the activities I can that will help prepare them for the test and if they do well, they do well, and if they don't, then I know they've tried. It's one day out of their life.

School Reactions to Assessment Results

Productive responses. We observed productive responses at schools where educators took some responsibility for how students had performed on the assessment and developed strategies for improving student performance on the 1993-94 assessment. Generally, it appeared that staff at schools that were working as a unit in some sort of structured way to improve student performance felt more in control of their destinies and had a more positive response to the assessment than staff at schools where teachers were left to their own devices. This was true regardless of how the school performed on the assessment.

The principal at an elementary school that met its threshold reported that a school committee was reviewing three years of assessment results and plotting profiles, by grade and by individual, looking for trends, patterns, and areas teachers need to concentrate on in order to maintain the school's performance. Her comments about the new assessment program reflect the overall positive tone she set for the school:

> Well, we are successful.... We're not too irate about it. When you look at what they're asking kids and you look at the types of questions they're asking children, it's much more realistic than what we've ever asked of kids in the past. It *is* real

life kinds of things.... *I* think they're hard.... I don't think it's so hard for the kids to do, it's difficult for us to teach because we're not used to doing that.

An eighth-grade teacher at the same school shared her reactions to the assessment results:

I think they were pretty good. Considering the group of kids that we worked with last year, I was very impressed. These kids were low achievers...I mean, they just came right back from nowhere. I had this group of kids in seventh grade in language arts and when they came to me, most of them could not even write a complete sentence.... I think 16 of them scored "proficient" in the eighth grade. Now that is progressive...that's making changes. These kids are learning to communicate.

In another district, the principal at a school that scored halfway between its baseline and threshold scores expressed surprise that students had not performed better on the assessment, but placed much of the responsibility for this on the school itself. She expressed confidence that several strategies planned for 1993-94 would improve assessment results:

I think we need more assessment days, which we're building in one per month in which they will do actual performance tasks. The fourth grade will spend a morning doing performance tasks. Also, every grade is going to be doing performance tasks and they have to write a plan up for me. So I think we didn't have enough of that. We did not teach the children how to do extensions; if you don't do an extension you won't get the credit. In other words, you have to be able to apply it to the real world. Finding the right answer is not enough; you have to go on and apply it, and we did not push that. In our writing, some of our teachers were almost doing a recipe-type thing because they did not have the training they needed to teach writing. They felt if they told the kids to have an opening paragraph and topic sentence and all of this it would all fall in place, whereas if they would have let the children get an idea they believe in and show voice and take it from there, we would get quality. We were almost getting recipe-type stories in some ways. And that's because they hadn't had the training.

The principal's attitude toward the assessment carried over to some of the teachers. For example, a fourth-grade teacher took a great deal of responsibility for her students' performance on the assessment, and expressed optimism that scores will improve this year:

When I looked at the scores, I was very surprised and worried, because I thought, "There's no way we can pull these up." Then when I got my score sheet that showed all the students' scores, I realized it actually wasn't that bad. We did go down in math and I'm concerned about that, but math on that test is very different from any math that students have been familiar with, or parents, or anyone. I was concerned that our social studies scores were really low, [but] I feel like the things

> I'm doing in my social studies program this year are going to improve it a lot. We're doing a lot of open-response and writing for a purpose. I was a little concerned about the science, [but] I wasn't really surprised. I was developing my program last year; last year was my first year in fourth grade after three years of teaching fifth grade, so it had been several years since I had been in a fourth-grade classroom and a lot of things had changed. I knew that science was an area that I was probably a little weaker in than the other ones. Plus, I had never seen any of the test items at all until the month before, when we were given some sample items. That was the first time I had seen them and I said, "Uh oh, I'm in trouble." Because I knew my students hadn't been used to doing these type of questions because I didn't know what type of questions they were going to be doing. I feel better about it this year.

In a third district where high school scores fell below the baseline, the SBDM council and the curriculum committee with faculty input developed a plan for improving assessment scores. They sponsored a voluntary training on assessment attended by most teachers. At another school in the same district, teachers voluntarily attended a training session (organized by the principal) on using open-response questions in the classroom.

Nonproductive responses. Nonproductive responses were heard at schools where educators said that assessment results depend on the inherent ability of students. Respondents at these schools appeared to believe that there was little they could do to make a major difference in how students performed. A junior high teacher at a school where high school scores fell below the baseline described the reactions of high school teachers and staff to the assessment results:

> They don't know why they dropped.... They're all thinking it's the composition of the kids that made the difference.... We've scrambled around. It's like having a platoon that's in trouble without a leader.... Nobody knows quite what to do so everybody is coming up with ideas, some of which get tried, some of which have a longer life span than others, but there's not a cohesive plan.... We don't know what the hell is going on, all right? And so [teachers] say, "One thing I know is that [the state is] weak legally." Really, this is what goes through people's heads.... They're long since over, "What can we do in here as a group to make [the scores] better?" and they're into, "How can I protect my"—they're overwhelmed big time. They're operating on reflexes because they don't know what to do.

Principals at two small schools in different districts—both of which performed well on the 1992-93 assessment—expressed concern that the accountability system does not allow for the variability that can be expected wherever class sizes are so small that scores cannot be expected to "average out." One principal noted that the exceedingly high 1992-93 scores for the school's eighth-grade students were based on seven bright students. He predicted that, after producing

some of the highest scores in the state in 1992-93, the school will be declared "in crisis" when 1993-94 scores come in. The fifth/sixth-grade teacher at this school said:

> At our school, [because of] how small it is, when you add in one exception that scores low; one in with seven kids. I have one student who scored a distinguished in math and pulled up the whole score. His score was half of the score for that grade, he got half the points. It's sink or swim for us. There needs to be some kind of exception for really small schools.

It should be noted that in June 1994, the State Board for Elementary and Secondary Education approved a plan by the state department of education to develop recommendations for "equitable and fair handling of accountability procedures in extraordinary school circumstances, e.g., small schools" (Kentucky Department of Education, 4/26/94; Kentucky State Board for Elementary and Secondary Education, 1994).

Teachers at some schools reported that they did not know what they had done that caused assessment scores to rise or fall, or how to improve student performance the next time. Often, these teachers felt that all the responsibility for improving scores was being placed on them. A fourth-grade teacher remarked:

> I've been called in by my principal, and my students have got to improve this year.... The pressure is on Miss _____. And I said, "Mr. _____, what am I to do?" And he said, "If I were in your shoes, I'd get down there and I would stress that writing and I would dare any of them to give me a two-sentence answer." Because that's the way the state is going to judge me. They're going to judge me and my students on how well we can pull up our scores. I understand that portfolios are 80% of the score. So Mr. _____ is telling me to get down there and write.

In another district, teachers at a school that had progressed halfway toward its threshold score were traumatized by a state audit of portfolio scores that resulted in lowering the school's scores. The principal explained:

> You can rescore us and if we're doing something wrong, that's fine. Come and show us, let us know what we're doing wrong. Our teachers just got frustrated over it.... The central office tried to help us a lot themselves, but there were some things that they didn't even know.... My teachers were coming to me and saying, "Hey Mr. _____, if we scored high and we've done it wrong, show us." I can't show them, I don't know how to show them, and I'll admit it. But then when we ask for someone to show us, they can't either.

It should be noted that the state department of education recognized the trauma experienced by districts whose scores were audited. A new process was instituted in the summer

of 1994 in which writing portfolio scores were analyzed for half of all the schools in the state. The purpose of the scoring analysis was to provide schools with feedback on scoring accuracy, instructional patterns found in portfolios, and recommendations for professional development and scoring training (Kingston, 1994).

Nonresponses. Nonresponses typically came from schools that met their thresholds or made significant progress toward it. Attitudes at these schools were somewhere between productive and nonproductive responses. Educators tended to take some pride in how their school had done and hoped that they could maintain the performance, but were taking little or no action to ensure it. An eighth-grade teacher at a school that nearly met its 1993-94 threshold in 1992-93 described responses to the assessment results:

> It's just business as usual. Really, there's not much difference in what we've been doing.... Nobody knows why they went up....it could be for any reason, could be a different group of students. Nobody...knows why they went up, they really don't. They just look at it as one of the, it's like a road with bumps in it: some are up and some are down. It's not like we instituted this new program and we can tie this to this and this to this. They just happened to go up. Now, they might go down next time.

Discussion of Findings on Instruction, Assessment, and Accountability

Our observations and interviews suggest that nearly all teachers in the study schools have made changes in their instruction in response to KERA. The level of change varied considerably from one classroom to the next, but given that teachers in upper-elementary classrooms have been given relatively little guidance about what they can do to help students achieve KERA goals, it is significant that they made as many changes as they had.

Even though many teachers appeared to be trying to change their instruction in ways designed to achieve KERA goals, the quantity and quality of instruction varied widely. Many teachers appeared to rely chiefly on teacher-directed approaches involving memorization and repetition, except for occasional writing and math portfolio assignments. Others attempted to engage students in group activities, but did not appear to know how to assist students in working together cooperatively. This suggests that teachers could benefit from professional development in instructional approaches that encourage student self-direction, critical thinking, problem solving, cooperative group effort, and the application of skills to real life. A stronger emphasis in all training on the need to ensure that ***all*** students achieve KERA goals may help teachers understand the need to vary their instructional approaches, and may expand teachers' expectations of students.

The fact that most of the changes appeared to be assessment-driven is not surprising when one considers that KERA was designed as an assessment-driven reform. The most positive outcome was the widespread use of writing across the curriculum, which resulted from the portfolio component of the assessment program. Even though many teachers complained that writing was overemphasized, they conceded that students' writing and thinking abilities improved tremendously because of this emphasis. Another positive outcome was that assessment seemed to force positive instructional and assessment changes that might not have otherwise occurred.

Still, the assessment-driven approach is not without problems. Many teachers resent the portfolios, as well as a perceived mandate to throw away the textbook and every other "traditional" instructional approach they have ever used. Many teachers were in a mind-set described by Nobel and Smith (1994) as "behaviorist," in that they believed it was their role to present knowledge and information to the students until they learned it. They had not bought into the "cognitive-constructivist" (Nobel & Smith, 1994) philosophy embodied in KERA, which holds that students must actively participate in and construct their own learning. Thus, teachers were being forced to utilize instructional approaches that were, to them, of questionable value.

This came through most clearly in the context of math and writing portfolios. Many teachers were concerned that the time they were forced to spend on portfolios left little time for teaching "basic skills" such as punctuation, spelling, grammar, and math facts. While these skills could be taught as part of the writing process and portfolio development, many teachers seemed unsure or unknowledgeable of ways to make instruction and assessment "seamless"—a purported goal of performance-based, assessment-driven reform (Winograd & Webb, 1994).

If teachers are to implement KERA effectively without becoming bitter and resentful, they clearly need more training on how to combine instruction and assessment in the classroom. While the accountability aspect of the assessment program might force teachers to implement certain strategies to help students achieve KERA goals, instruction would certainly be more effective and pleasant if teachers understood and supported the need for implementing those strategies.

The threat of sanctions generally appeared to have a demoralizing effect on teachers. Some said the system of rewards and sanctions impugns their professionalism. On the whole, sanctions may be more deleterious than helpful to KERA, because the threat of sanctions appears to have led some teachers to blame the assessment instrument itself for poor results rather than to develop strategies to improve student performance. Even many teachers who took a proactive approach to improving student performance expressed uncertainty that they were doing the right things to achieve success, and resented that they may be punished when they are still trying to work out the problems in their classroom program.

Finally, it appeared that the majority of schools we visited had ***not*** engaged in a coordinated, cohesive effort at helping students achieve KERA goals. Those that had were often

struggling to implement improvement plans. Given that most schools in the past were not organized to allow school faculties to operate as cohesive teams, it is not surprising that educators were having difficulty adapting to their new role. Such radical change will not only require time for assimilation but also may need to be cultivated through training on group process and leadership.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The preceding discussion section contains many suggestions that teachers in Grades 4 through 8 could use more training on how to assist their students in achieving KERA goals. It should be noted that, to the credit of the legislature and the state department of education, a great deal of professional development funding and resources has been made available. The legislature funded professional development at $1 per pupil the first year of KERA, $5 the second year, and $16 the next two years. This amount will increase even more during the 1994-96 biennium. Much of this money is available to schools to spend at their discretion. Also, since 1992-93, districts have been permitted to take five additional days (beyond the four already mandated) for professional development.

Just as primary teachers have received extensive training on instructional strategies that incorporate the seven critical attributes of the primary program into their classrooms, teachers in the upper-elementary grades need ongoing and focused professional development on instructional strategies and on how to incorporate assessment techniques into regular classroom instruction. Entire school faculties need training and technical assistance on how to operate as cohesive teams to help all students achieve KERA goals.

Several resources and opportunities have been provided by KDE to assist teachers in designing instruction aimed at KERA goals. These include the model curriculum framework *Transformations*, and training for elementary teachers in the summer of 1994 on designing instructional units using the framework; the Kentucky Writing Project, which trains teachers to write and to teach writing; and a leadership program called "KERA Fellows." In addition, KDE reports that elementary content guidelines and course outlines will be available early in the 1994-95 school year.

Resources are also available from other sources. For example, KDE in partnership with the Kentucky Science and Technology Council, colleges and universities, and local districts and businesses, is reshaping science and math education through a project known as the Partnership for Reform Initiatives in Science and Mathematics (PRISM). PRISM trains classroom teachers as math specialists, and has also recently developed 42 science instructional units. In addition, the Kentucky Education Association has instituted a program known as Teachers to the Power of Two, in which teachers with successful KERA programs are given release time from the

classroom to assist other teachers in the classroom. These and other resources are routinely advertised and described in KDE's monthly newsletter for teachers.

Some of the teachers in the four study districts have taken advantage of the available resources, mostly notably the Kentucky Writing Project and PRISM. These teachers responded favorably to the training they received. Many other teachers, however, have not explored or taken advantage of the available resources. These teachers are struggling to determine how to help their students achieve KERA goals and expectations.

The 1994 legislature responded to teachers' fears about the accountability measures by delaying the most severe sanctions (e.g., the "schools in crisis" designation) for two years. This move seems warranted, given that teachers spent the first two years after the passage of KERA receiving training, and have only begun to implement new instructional approaches. In addition, this will provide KDE additional time to fix the problems in the assessment and accountability system. Two extra years of assessment data could indicate whether or not the assessment is a valid measure of school success.

Given the comprehensive nature of KERA and of the changes required of teachers, it is essential that ***all*** teachers be provided with training and resources in all areas in which they must provide instruction. This will take time and a continued effort on the part of the legislature, the state board of education, and the state department of education to continue making professional development funding and opportunities available and easily accessible to all teachers. Schools and teachers, too, must work toward obtaining ongoing professional development that will assist them in understanding and implementing needed changes.

Everyone must resist the temptation to assume that, now that KERA has been in effect for four years, everyone should be fully and effectively implementing the reform. We have seen that change is beginning to happen in Kentucky schools, but that many schools and teachers have only made a start. In addition, many teachers have made only the changes required up to this point. Full and effective implementation of KERA will take many more years, and can only be accomplished if teachers themselves come to understand the need for reform and how to implement it.

EXTENDED SCHOOL SERVICES (ESS)

Summary of Major Findings

- The instructional model that predominated in the ESS classrooms we observed was a model in which students brought work from their regular classrooms (either homework, class work, or supplementary activities sent by the regular classroom teacher) to the ESS program. ESS teachers supervised or provided individual help to students as they completed this work.
  - Only two schools (of the 13 visited) had no teachers who used the model described above.
  - ESS teachers were not required to do much, if any, planning when they used this model.
  - This "homework" or "study hall" model might be helpful for students who simply need individual help or quiet time after school to complete their homework or class work. The model appeared most helpful when ESS teachers circulated and offered assistance, and when class sizes were small enough so that the teacher could help all students.
- There were many reports and other evidence that large class size is a problem in ESS, particularly when a tutorial model is employed.
- The conditions that seemed to facilitate direct assistance from ESS teachers to students were:
  - Class sizes were small (teachers seemed best able to attend to all students when six or fewer were present).
  - Teachers worked with students whom they taught during the regular instructional day.
  - Teachers used whole group or small group instruction.
- ESS program planning occurred at the district level in Lamont County and Vanderbilt County. In Newtown Independent and Orange County (the two eastern Kentucky districts), much of the planning occurred at the school level.
- We found no evidence of ongoing formal communication between ESS teachers and regular classroom teachers. The extent of informal communication among teachers appeared to vary among schools and teachers. Evidence from one Lamont County school suggested that informal communication was more frequent and ongoing when teachers taught in departments or teams. Communication was also less of a problem when teachers taught children they had during the regular school day or when ESS was taught by special education teachers who worked in the children's classrooms during the school day.

- Reports about the effectiveness of the ESS program were inconsistent. Most teachers we talked to thought the program was worthwhile and effective, and some parents and students agreed. In fact, a few students asked to be placed in the program in order to receive assistance. There were hints and statements from several principals and parents, however, that the program was ineffective.

- Generally, the ESS program did not appear to be part of an overall plan for school improvement or for meeting KERA goals, although some teachers or teacher teams used the program to help students achieve KERA goals (for instance, by having students work on portfolios during ESS). For the most part, however, the ESS program appeared to be separate from the school. Symbolically, people at some schools referred to the program as the "after-school program" rather than the "extended school program."

Overview of the Law

KERA requires local school districts to provide "continuing education" for students who need additional time to achieve the outcomes specified in the law (KRS 158.070). It defines "additional time" as extended days, weeks, or years and allows but does not require districts to mandate attendance for some students. Since programs to provide additional time may be held before or after school, on weekends, or during the summer vacation, it appears that any time not included in the regularly scheduled school day is considered "extended." Extended school services were initiated in 1990-91 as one of the first KERA curriculum provisions to be implemented.

The state department of education (KDE) has established a formula for allotting ESS grants to local school districts based on number of at-risk students, KIRIS test results, and other criteria. This formula, together with administrative regulations, has been adopted by the State Board of Education (704 KAR 3:390). These regulations place few restrictions on districts' implementation of the program or their methods of identifying students and teachers for the program. In addition to the regular ESS programs for which all districts are eligible, KDE has established a small competitive grants program to fund innovative ESS programs.

By statute, funding is distributed to school districts rather than to individual schools, and districts are required to apply annually for ESS funds and to establish ESS policies. These policies must establish procedures for: selecting students for and referring students to the program; notifying parents of their children's selection and developing appeal procedures for children identified for the program or excluded from it against the parents' wishes; establishing instructional and support services to enable the students to achieve the expected outcomes; evaluating program effectiveness; and supplying fiscal and other data to KDE. State regulations do not specify criteria for students' eligibility for the program, and districts around the state have developed policies that differ considerably from one another.

KDE's expectations for "full implementation" are as follows:

> It is expected that both the student's regular teacher and ESS teacher will work collaboratively to determine the student's individual needs and design a program that will utilize the additional instructional time (ESS) in the most productive manner in order to reach the goals of the student's program. Although varied activities and techniques are encouraged within the ESS program, these activities and techniques should always support the program of the regular classroom and teacher (Kentucky Department of Education, June 1993).

Other expectations are that the local districts and schools will fully seek the support and involvement of parents and community, that they "will design and implement an ESS program that is responsive to the needs of the students and that will encourage the full participation of the students who are selected to attend the program," and that they will modify the program as needed "to continually ensure its effectiveness" (Kentucky Department of Education, June 1993).

Methodology

This report is based on classroom observations of ESS programs at 14 schools, interviews with a variety of people, and documentary sources. Table 6 indicates the sources of information about ESS in each of the study districts.

Table 6

Sources of Information on ESS

	Lamont	Newtown	Orange	Vanderbilt
Interviews				
Principals (or asst)	3	0	3	2
Teachers	6	2	7	9
ESS coordinators (non-teachers)	0	0	0	2
Students	7	0	2	6
Parents	0	0	1	5
YSC director	0	0	1	0
Observations				
ESS classes	8	3	7	8
SBDM council meetings	0	0	1	1
School board meeting	0	1	0	0
Documents				
Parent survey	0	0	1	0

All the observed ESS classes were part of after-school programs, some devoted to specific subjects such as reading or math and some offering instruction in any area of student need or assistance with homework (including writing and math portfolio assignments). All classes were observed for at least 20 minutes on a single day. All interviews listed above with ESS and other teachers included specific discussions of the ESS program, and all meetings listed provided information specific to the ESS program.

The research plan called for us to observe one full hour of after-school ESS programs at each school at which we made full-day observations during the 1993-94 year. We made observations in 100 percent of the Newtown schools, four-sevenths of the Orange County schools, and 80 percent of the Lamont County and Vanderbilt County schools. At each school, we spent at least 20 minutes in at least two ESS classrooms.

District-level data were supplemented with information gathered at the state level, including several documents issued by the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE), a state board of education meeting, and an interview with KDE staff who oversee the ESS program.

Current Status

All of the study districts have ESS programs in every school except alternative schools. There is an ESS coordinator in each district and each school, although in some cases the school coordinator's responsibilities are only fiduciary. Each district's program and eligibility criteria are described below.

Lamont County

Every school has an ESS program for one hour after school on Mondays and Wednesdays. Transportation is provided. The high school also offers a morning ESS program for which transportation is not provided. The district received an "innovative" ESS grant, which provided a four-week summer program in 1994 to help middle school students who attended ESS during the school year make the transition to high school. All students who are eligible for Chapter 1 are also eligible for ESS. Participation in both the regular and innovative programs is voluntary. Some schools give students general assistance while others (particularly at the high school) offer assistance in one subject area only, although high school students may receive services in more than one subject area during the year.

Newtown Independent

In both schools there is a one-hour program after school: four days a week at the high school/middle school (staggered so that each student attends only three days a week) and three

days a week at the elementary school. Transportation is provided to students who live in the district. The elementary program helps students in more than one subject area while the middle/high school program offers assistance in only one subject area per day. ESS programs at the two schools differ considerably and appear to operate independently. Program planning appears to have taken place almost completely at the school level. At both schools, students are recommended for the program by teachers. There are no set eligibility requirements other than parental permission. If there is space in the programs, students who were not recommended but who wish to stay after school for extra help may do so.

Orange County

All schools offer an ESS program for one hour after school. Transportation is provided; for ease of transportation, elementary schools have ESS on the same two days of the week, and the high school and middle school have ESS on another two days. District policy requires that any student who has earned a grade lower than "C" be given an "I" (incomplete). The student must attend ESS until the grade is made up. If space is available, other students are referred to the program according to criteria developed at the school rather than the district level. All programs at the schools studied (which did not include the high school) offer assistance in a variety of subject areas; most offer assistance with homework or other work assigned by the teacher, but at least one school requires ESS teachers to offer original instruction in students' areas of weakness rather than assisting with homework. Program planning appears to occur primarily at the school level, though all schools must abide by the board policy of requiring students with "I"s to attend ESS and all must offer ESS at the same time (to facilitate the bus schedule).

During the 1993-94 school year, the high school offered programs supported by an "innovative" ESS grant. These programs, some of which occurred during the school day, were designed to bring at-risk and other students together to work on the types of projects in which at-risk students seldom participate.

Vanderbilt County

All schools offer an ESS program for one hour after school on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Transportation is provided. Any student in Grades 3-12 whose grade average in reading, mathematics, or language arts is 77 percent or below is eligible for the program. In 1993-94 (for the first time) students whose grade averages climbed above 77 percent were allowed to remain in the program if space was available. Attendance is voluntary for students referred to the program, and parents must grant their permission. Any student with two unexcused absences is expelled.

Discussion of Findings

"Homework" vs. Direct Instruction Model

Of the 25 ESS classes observed, 16 employed a "homework" model, in which students brought work from their regular classrooms—either homework, class work, or supplementary activities sent by the regular classroom teacher—to the ESS program. ESS teachers supervised or provided individual help to students as they completed this work. One class was observed during which students worked on "homework" but later engaged in a whole group activity led by the teacher. In eight other classes, students received direct instruction from the teacher or peer tutors. In four of the "homework" classes, students were allowed to play educational games or work at the computer after they completed their assigned work for the class. In another class, however, students who finished their assignments before the period ended were given a worksheet on math facts.

The "homework" model appeared to require little or no preparation on the part of teachers. In the few instances when the teacher provided the class with direct instruction, the lessons appeared to require varying amounts of preparation. The least amount of preparation seemed to be needed when the teacher had all the students in the class work through the same worksheet, complete a lesson begun in class, engage in round-robin reading, or work individually on the same portfolio assignment. Lessons that appeared to require more preparation involved a multisensory exercise leading to a writing assignment that might become a portfolio piece and a "hands-on" lesson teaching the concept of fractions.

One principal explained that his school had begun the year with a "homework" model ESS program, in which teachers assisted children with homework assignments. However, he said, "That took the parents completely out of the picture in some cases. Therefore, we went back to ESS being direct teaching." Teachers were to identify a student's areas of weakness when referring him or her to ESS; the ESS teacher would then develop lessons to address these areas. About 10 children dropped out of ESS when they learned they would not receive help with their homework. The principal explained that the direct instruction model required students to apply what they learned in ESS to their current classwork, which they were expected to do independently: "It made a transfer stage necessary, which some children and parents didn't want to take place. Therefore, they dropped out."

Class Size

Class size varied a great deal in the ESS classes we observed. In some cases, teachers said the classes were smaller than usual due to absences; in others, where there were no penalties for skipping, teachers did not know in advance how many students to expect. A teacher who was working with eight students (on a "homework" model) on the day she was observed said that she sometimes had as many as 16, though she usually had fewer than 10.

In Lamont County, class size varied considerably from school to school. The lowest pupil-teacher ratio was 7:1. Another school had ratios ranging from 9:1 to 11:1, while ratios in the third school ranged from 10:1 to 15:1. In Newtown, we observed elementary classes with ratios of 6:1. At the Newtown middle/high school, one class had a 13:1 ratio, but the teacher was assisted by three high school students funded through a separate grant. In Orange County, pupil-teacher ratios ranged from 4:1 to 11:1, with a typical ratio of about 8:1. In Vanderbilt County, pupil-teacher ratios in ESS classes ranged from 4:1 to 8:1; in only one of the four schools observed was the ratio 8:1.

Our observations revealed that teachers were not usually able to give individual attention to all students in a "homework" model setting if there were more than six or seven students per teacher. The larger the pupil-teacher ratio, the greater the number of students who received no coaching at all during an hour of ESS. In one class, a teacher who was working with eight students did not interact with seven of the students unless they specifically requested her help; one very demanding student monopolized her time. This teacher felt guilty about the situation but felt she could not withhold attention from the demanding student, who was a very able student but only when he received one-on-one attention. She said she was grateful that the other students in the class had learned to work independently and showed good judgment in knowing when they really needed to ask for help.

One teacher pointed out that, even in ESS, the pupil-teacher ratio was too high:

> I think sometimes there's too many kids for each teacher in ESS, to allow students to receive help, because, when students are staying after school to get extra help, they usually need more one-on-one help. I've got 95 percent of my class who can follow me, but you've got those few—two or three—that really need you to sit right beside them the whole time to help guide them. And you can't do that in the classroom. I'd like to see someone that could. You do the best you can. You guide them as much as you can, but you've got 25 other kids. A lot of times, the ones that stay after school for ESS are the ones that need you to sit right beside them. And, when you've got as many as 10 kids in a room—or even eight—it's still hard. But I think it helps.

Direct instruction helped eliminate the problems of large class size but did not necessarily ensure that students received more time with the teacher. For example, students who were all working on the same worksheet did not necessarily receive any more attention than students doing a variety of homework assignments, and a teacher who read a chapter of a classic story to her fourth-grade ESS class and then required them to write synopses of the plot paid individual attention only to those students who were disrupting the class.

Communication Problems

None of the ESS teachers we observed had formally allocated time for communication with students' regular classroom teachers. In many cases, classroom teachers were asked to

indicate the areas in which students needed additional work when they referred children to ESS, but they did not necessarily continue to communicate regularly with the ESS teacher. In team-teaching situations in Lamont County, teams had regularly scheduled joint planning time; this allowed teachers to communicate informally but frequently about ESS students. In a number of other schools, teachers communicated informally (during lunch, for example) about individual students.

Some schools had a policy of assigning students to ESS classes taught by their regular classroom teachers or at least by teachers at the same grade level who were familiar with the curriculum they were studying. In one case, a teacher taught a small ESS class made up entirely of students from her regular class. The ESS class finished a lesson that the regular class had been working on earlier in the day. In another school, ESS was taught by the school's special education teachers, who worked with special education students in the regular classroom rather than on a pull-out basis. In this case, the classroom teachers reported that they did not need to communicate with the ESS teachers, because the ESS teachers were already familiar with the content being taught and frequently understood the students' needs without having to be told.

In one small community-oriented school, parents had been surveyed concerning the ESS program and the program had sent a newsletter to parents. We found no other evidence that parents or community members were involved in a school's ESS program or that the school had made any effort to involve them. In only one interview did a school employee (a principal) comment on the lack of parental or community involvement. Another principal (quoted above explaining why his school changed from a "homework" to a "direct instruction" model) cited the need for parental involvement but not in the ESS program *per se*; his feeling was that parents rather than the school should be responsible for seeing that children do their homework.

Program Effectiveness

Most of the teachers we interviewed—ESS and regular classroom teachers alike—had favorable things to say about the ESS program. In a school that requires ESS teachers to provide direct instruction rather than assistance with homework, one of the consequences (probably unintended) was that students generally did not get help in assembling their portfolios during ESS. A fourth-grade mathematics teacher in this school reported that she was spending ***all*** of her allotted planning time working with students who needed extra help in assembling math portfolios. She thought, however, that the ESS program was important.

During the 1992-93 school year, we interviewed one ESS teacher who was critical of the program. She said, "They're too tired. They're burned out. They're through for the day. It's just a waste of their time." This teacher, however, pointed out that the students were able to finish their homework, with her help, and in this sense the program was beneficial.

One advantage of the homework model was that it provided extra time for students to work on reading or mathematics portfolios. We saw a number of students working on portfolio

assignments in ESS classes. Even when students were not working on their portfolios, the homework or other assignments they brought to ESS classes were often nontraditional and required high-level cognitive skills. For instance, two fourth-graders were observed creating an "animation panel"; this assignment required them to construct a large poster and to create cartoons, as well as to explain animation more traditionally. Thus, if classroom work was nontraditional (as we found in a number of classes), the homework brought to ESS was usually nontraditional as well.

In general, the effectiveness of an ESS program appeared to depend largely on the skills and dedication of the individual teacher, as well as on the size of the class and the teacher's knowledge of the students. We frequently observed that, in the same school at more or less the same grade level, one teacher would present a highly engaging lesson from which students appeared to be learning a lot, while another would preside over an hour of instruction that appeared, at best, humdrum. This held true for both the homework model and the direct instruction model. When helping students with homework or other work assigned by the teacher, some teachers managed to confer frequently with all students in the class, while a few ignored students except when specifically asked for help.

This variability even within the same school probably accounts for the variability in students', parents', and principals' assessment of the ESS program. Many students said they had received a lot of help and had brought their grades up considerably through participation in the ESS program, while others said they had been ignored and had dropped out. In some districts students were allowed to refer themselves to the program. A number of students did this, and they were often more positive about the program than those who had been referred by teachers or who were required to attend. In Orange County, where ESS was required for students who received grades of less than "C," there were indications that the mandate had stigmatized the program to some degree.

Some parents were enthusiastic about ESS programs, some were critical, and others appeared not to know much about it. Over half of the principals we interviewed were enthusiastic; only three were quite critical. One principal said that the custodians—the only disinterested school staff in a position to observe what was going on in most ESS classes—reported that they thought the children's time was being wasted. In this same school, however, every teacher we interviewed expressed enthusiasm for the program.

A principal in another district reported that he felt his school's ESS program was ineffective:

> Those kids that I have trouble with all day long and teachers have all day long, 90 percent of those are the ones we've got in extended school. We're keeping them here at school another hour longer every day. They're the kids that are not doing anything while we've got them here fresh in the morning, and we're wanting to keep them here longer in the afternoon. It doesn't make sense to me that they're learning a whole lot.

The same principal felt that his teachers were referring an inappropriate group of students to ESS. Strategically, he felt that the school would be better off concentrating on students with the potential of raising their KIRIS scores from "novice" to "apprentice" or "apprentice" to "proficient."

> I think it's targeting the wrong kids. Here's what you've got to understand: we're in a game here. I don't care what KERA says: "All children can learn." They can't. And the reason they can't, they don't all come from the same background. If I could take these little kids that I have trouble with that come from these bad families...and put them over in a good family and a good environment, yeah, they can learn, and they'd probably learn at a good rate. The trouble is, I get kids in here that have been beat—the whole nine yards. I just got off the phone calling Social Services, and they're either coming today or tomorrow. Some kid's parents told him they hated him; the mother said, "I don't want you, you're like your old daddy." She has already driven Daddy off. But that's something the state doesn't understand. I don't think they understand it, when you get into this testing deal. ESS is targeted toward those students. If I was running it, I'd put my good students in there—the ones that I thought I could get out of my office, my average kids. You're graded on how many kids you move up the ladder from "novice" on up. I just think, from the standpoint of the principal, if you targeted more of those monies toward maybe not your real good kids but your middle kids that have a chance of moving up, [it would be better]. So many of these kids in ESS come from families that we can't control their environment. I don't know, I just don't think they get that much out of it.

Integration of ESS with the Total School Program

In all but one of the schools we studied, we found few indications that the school staff thought of ESS as a program that should be designed to strengthen the school in general. The frequency with which ESS was referred to as the "after-school program" was one sign of its lack of integration into the regular school program. The quotation above from the principal who felt ESS was targeting the wrong children was one of very few indications that anyone was thinking about the program strategically (though in a way that ran counter to the state department of education's expectations for the ESS program).

In contrast, at one Orange County school ESS was considered part of a schoolwide plan to assist students in doing extra work to bring up their grades. A provision for students to receive extra teacher attention during the school day was also part of the plan. Unfortunately, ESS in this school did not live up to these expectations. Perhaps because they were aware of this, neither the principal nor the school's ESS coordinator were eager to discuss the program. Asked to rate the program's effectiveness, the principal said: "It's like anything else, it's as good as the advantage you take of it. We have several children that need to take advantage of it that don't."

Even though county school board policy mandated these children's attendance, the principal pointed out that attendance at ESS is like school attendance: "It's only as mandatory as you can get them to do." She added:

> It's a good program and a good opportunity, but what we probably need to do is work out, maybe, a better system of what we need to be doing with the kids.... Once we get ...these individual profiles [of student performance, developed for the School Transformation Plan Committee] worked up...they'll help—a lot.

In addition, she acknowledged that the program was not being implemented as originally planned:

> When a child comes to Extended School, if there's something that teacher wants them to work on, they're to have that documented and all that. And I think...we're a little lax on that, and a lot of times we've got kids there that have nothing specific to do, and individual teachers really...are not quite sure what to do, so we need to work a little more making sure that time's valuable rather than just being another hour of, "here I am at school" and not really important things happening.

It is ironic that ESS was not being implemented as part of the School Transformation Plan even in this school—the only school we studied where the plan appeared to be affecting classroom interactions generally. Not only did the school council take responsibility for the development of the plan, but in other areas of the curriculum teachers appeared to take it very seriously and to implement it in similar ways at every grade level we observed.

Discussion

Several factors appeared to account for the isolation of the ESS program from school life in general. First, the structure of the program at the state level appears to be a major factor. Districts rather than schools are responsible for planning and applying for the programs. Funds are distributed to the districts, and districts decide how to distribute the funding to schools. Since most districts allocate funding on a per-pupil basis, schools with many eligible students receive the same funding as schools with few eligible students. Because of this "top-down" structure, with schools receiving funds and usually program plans from the district, it appears to be very difficult for schools to develop ownership of the programs.

Second, only a very small part of ESS funds can be used for administrative purposes; thus, ESS coordinators have virtually no paid time for planning or providing technical assistance. Third, in many quarters ESS is perceived as a "bonus" for teachers, who earn additional money with very little accountability. Teachers are paid only for the time they spend in the classroom with ESS students. Thus, there is a strong, built-in incentive to plan programs that require minimum planning or assessment. At least one teacher who put considerable effort into her ESS

class talked about the program primarily as a "perk" that allowed her to augment her income. Fourth, in 1993-94 the written materials designed to help schools develop School Transformation Plans did not mention ESS; this is another reason that school staffs may not think of the program as part of an integrated effort at school improvement.

In addition, ESS is generally thought of as a tutoring program, and teachers and administrators generally feel that they already understand the tutoring process. At a time when teachers and administrators in Kentucky are receiving more professional development than they can easily assimilate and are making major changes in the way they conduct school, it is easy to let a program slide when it is perceived as something that can be done without additional training or preparation. ESS programs were the first KERA programs to be implemented, but training was not provided at that time, which implied that schools already knew how to implement the program. ESS programs were already in place by the time the primary program and other KERA initiatives were being planned, which made it difficult to integrate them into general KERA implementation or even to think of them as one of the KERA initiatives.

Although the program may have some stigma attached to it, it seemed to be relatively popular in the four study districts. Even obviously ineffective programs were not usually criticized openly, for fear of offending ESS teachers. Most school staffs appeared not to have internalized the need for cooperative effort in order to improve student achievement and meet the constantly increasing assessment thresholds. (See the section on instruction in Grades 4-8 in the chapter on Instruction, Assessment, and Accountability for a more detailed discussion of this phenomenon.)

SCHOOL-BASED DECISION MAKING (SBDM)

Summary of Major Findings

This chapter addresses the issue of school-based decision making in the study districts during 1993-94. (Findings prior to this are summarized in a December 1993 issues of "Notes from the Fields," which analyzed the seven school councils that had existed since 1991.)

We addressed three major questions concerning SBDM:

(1) Are decisions actually shared among the role groups represented on the school council?

(2) What factors facilitate or impede shared decision making?

(3) What kinds of decisions do councils make and what impact do those decisions have on the schools?

Our major findings can be summarized as follows:

- KERA-mandated school-based decision making gives councils significant authority over school functioning, if they choose to exercise it.

- The school councils we studied can be categorized according to their predominant decision making mode: ***balanced*** (all role groups contribute relatively equally to decisions); ***educator-dominated*** (teachers and the principal dominate and parents play a minor role); and ***principal-dominated*** (the council rubber-stamps decisions already made through the normal process). It is difficult to categorize councils during their first year, because they usually make an initial effort to engage in shared decision making but sometimes evolve into an educator- or principal-dominated mode.

- Factors that contributed to effective implementation of SBDM were the principal's support and facilitation of SBDM, leadership by other council members, training for council members, and attentiveness to the need for parent involvement. The opposite in any of these areas impeded SBDM implementation.

- During 1993-94, there were changes in the membership of the seven councils we studied. These changes, together with situational factors, altered the councils' decision making modes. Some moved toward balanced decision making, others moved in the other direction.

- Cultural factors unique to each district appear to have influenced the way in which councils have developed. While we cannot describe these factors definitively, they appear to be district-specific rather than regional, with one exception. In the two eastern Kentucky districts, there has been a great deal more suspicion of the motives and actions of central office administrators and the board of education than in the central or western Kentucky districts.

- The fact that all four study districts were small and rural appeared to affect the decision making mode.

  — In general, schools did not have to contend with major discipline problems or gang violence, as has been reported for inner city schools, although councils did discuss the difficulties children brought to school from multi-problem families and the students who were motivated (in eastern Kentucky, by prevailing norms) to drop out of school.

  — Since job applicants were usually known to council members, there was considerable pressure to hire local applicants or members of specific local factions. Controversy sometimes developed when a person from outside the district was hired.

  — Informal decision making processes were strongly influenced by community and district norms that had developed over several generations.

- Councils that practiced some level of shared decision making made key decisions in areas such as instructional budgeting, scheduling, and, to some extent, curriculum. All councils, regardless of their decision making mode, participated in decisions about personnel and, to some extent, discipline. Beyond this, councils that played an advisory role to the principal mostly rubber-stamped decisions made by the principal, teacher committees, or central office.

Overview of the Law: The SBDM Statutes (KRS160.345)

The KERA Mandate

Kentucky law required each local board of education to adopt a policy for implementing SBDM by January 1, 1991. At least one school in every district, except those containing only one school, was required to implement SBDM by June 30, 1991. If no school faculty voted for SBDM (by a two-thirds majority) by that date, the board was required to appoint a school.

All schools in Kentucky must implement SBDM by July 1, 1996, unless they are the only school in a district. A school achieving at or above the threshold level for student success defined by the state may also be exempted from SBDM if a majority of the faculty votes to do so and the school requests an exemption from the state board of education.

Council Composition

Each SBDM school must form a school council to set policy. The council consists of the principal, who acts as chair; three teachers, elected by a majority of teachers at the school; and two parents, elected by the parents of students enrolled at the school. Councils in schools with eight percent or more minority student enrollment that do not elect at least one minority member must organize a special election of parents of minority students to elect a minority parent member. These councils may also add a fourth teacher member through a special election. Council membership may be increased proportionately. Council members serve one-year terms and may serve consecutive terms if council bylaws permit. New legislation passed in 1994 authorizes councils, once elected, to establish different terms of office if the terms do not exceed two years and are not consecutive.

Schools may apply to the state board of education for an alternative council structure. In considering alternative models, the state board requires that parents make up at least one-third of the council. Councils may elect their own chairs if they apply for an alternative structure (Kentucky State Board for Elementary and Secondary Education, *Agenda Book*, July, 1993).

Participation in SBDM by Noncouncil Members

KERA specifies that certified staff (teachers and administrators) may participate in SBDM by serving on committees. Councils that establish committees must adopt a policy facilitating participation of interested persons, including classified staff and parents.

Council Responsibilities

Councils have the following responsibilities:

- to set school policy consistent with district board policy, to provide an environment that enhances student achievement and helps the school meet the goals established in KERA;
- to determine the frequency of and agenda for meetings [KRS 158.645, 6451 (1992)];
- to determine, within the limits of available funds, the number of persons to be employed in each job classification;

- to select a principal when a vacancy occurs;
- to consult with the principal in filling staff vacancies;
- to determine what textbooks, instructional materials, and student support services to provide;
- to set policy in nine areas: (1) curriculum (including needs assessment), (2) assignment of time during the school day, (3) assignment of students to classes and programs, (4) scheduling the school day and week subject to the school calendar year and beginning and ending times of the school day established by the local board, (5) use of school space during the school day, (6) instructional practices, (7) discipline and classroom management techniques, (8) extracurricular programs and policies governing student participation, and (9) procedures, consistent with local school board policy, for determining alignment with state standards, technology utilization, and program appraisal [KRS 160.345 (1992)].

The local board policy on SBDM must address procedures for council participation in decisions related to the school budget and administration, student assessment, school improvement plans, and professional development plans. In addition, the board may grant school councils any other authority permitted by law.

Methodology

District-Level Data

The 1993-94 research plan called for observations of at least half or six (whichever was fewer) of the council meetings held in all SBDM schools in the four districts. We observed one less meeting than the plan called for in Vanderbilt County and eight fewer meetings in Lamont County; these two districts had the largest number of SBDM schools.

We interviewed the principal and at least one parent council member at each SBDM school. We also included questions about SBDM in all formal interviews, even in non-SBDM schools. We observed two school board meetings. Table 7 summarizes the observations and formal interviews on which we based our discussion of SBDM.

Table 7

Major SBDM Data Sources

	Lamont County	Newtown Independent	Orange County	Vanderbilt County
Observations:				
School board mtgs.	2	2	2	2
Principals' meetings	1	0	0	0
SBDM training mtgs.	1	2[1]	1	1
School council mtgs.	11	12	7	20
Council comm. mtgs.	1	0	0	1
Parent elections for council reps.	0	0	0	2
PTA/PTO meetings	2[2]	0	0	0
Faculty meetings	1	0	0	0
Interviews:				
Superintendent/ central office	1	2	1	1
School board members	0	1	0	0
FRYSC directors	NA	NA	4	NA
Principals/asst.	4	2	4	7
Teacher council mbr.	6	1	1	3
Parent council mbr.	5	1	1	4
Other teachers[3]	12	8	8	6
Other parents[4]	2	0	1	1
Students	3[5]	0	1	1

[1]One of these training sessions was for the new council members; the other was to train SBDM committee members.

[2]Parent elections for council representatives were conducted at one of these meetings.

[3]This category includes former council members and SBDM committee members, as well as teachers with no formal SBDM affiliation.

[4]This category includes former council members and SBDM committee members.

[5]This figure includes one group interview.

In addition, each researcher analyzed many documents, including newspaper articles on SBDM or on council meetings, handouts at council meetings, council minutes, and documents provided during interviews (such as the results of a parent survey). In addition, we analyzed all board of education minutes.

We also gathered information during many informal discussions with the types of people listed in Table 8. (Since we had no interview protocols to ensure uniformity in these discussions, they are not listed in the table.) Each researcher also communicated often with key informants.

State-Level Data

In addition to district-level data, some information on SBDM was gathered at meetings of the Kentucky State Board for Elementary and Secondary Education.

The major source of state-level information on SBDM was a meeting of the Kentucky state board of education on July 7, 1994. At this meeting, the board approved the state department of education's 1994-95 strategic plan (which includes provisions affecting SBDM) and heard reports on the current status of SBDM in the state. The board also approved a new administrative regulation for textbooks and instructional materials adoption. This regulation stirred up some controversy, primarily over the role of school councils in textbook/materials adoption.

Current Status of SBDM Implementation

Table 8 summarizes SBDM implementation in the study districts. Clearly, the dynamic for SBDM development appeared to differ considerably from district to district.

Table 8

Data on SBDM Schools

	Regular schedule for meetings	Number of meetings[6]	Council member attendance
Lamont County			
Elementary School 1	yes	8	94%
Elementary School 2	yes	12	96%
High School[7]	yes	17	97%
Newtown Independent			
Elementary School	yes	14	98%
High School	NA	0	NA
Orange County			
Elementary School	yes	10[8]	85%[9]
High School	yes	2	NA
Vanderbilt County			
Elementary School 1	no	7	95%
Elementary School 2	no	11	94%
Elementary School 3	no	9	96%
High School	yes	10	87%[10]

[6]Numbers do not include special meetings called, for example, to interview job applicants.

[7]The NAS council did not start meeting until the 1994-95 school year.

[8]Two regularly scheduled meetings were cancelled during 1993-94. See the district case history for details.

[9]The principal attended 100% of the time and teacher members 97%. See the district case history for an explanation of the poor attendance by parent representatives.

[10]Although one member resigned and had to be replaced, this does not account for most of the absences that resulted in an average attendance of less than 90%.

Discussion of Major Findings

Balanced, Educator-Dominated, and Principal-Dominated Councils

The extent to which decision making was shared at the schools in our study closely mirrors findings from research in urban settings. For instance, Easton et al. (1993), in a study of local school councils in Chicago, identified four categories of school governance: limited, moderate, balanced, and excessive. Of the 14 councils studied, they classified seven as moderate, three as balanced, and two each as limited and excessive. Malen and Ogawa (1988) studied councils in Salt Lake City, Utah, and discovered that even though the councils were authorized to be decision makers, they mostly functioned as advisors and endorsers.

The councils in our study, like those in Chicago, fell along a continuum in terms of the extent to which decision making was shared. In an adaptation of the framework developed by Easton et al., we categorized councils into one of three decision making modes: balanced, educator-dominated, or principal-dominated. In balanced councils all participants (i.e., principals, teachers, and parents) contributed relatively equally to discussions and to the decision making process. In educator-dominated councils, teachers shared in the process with the principal but parents were left on the fringes, often without adequate information to make informed decisions. Principal-dominated councils essentially acted as advisory committees to the principal.

In 1992-93, only one of the seven councils appeared to have achieved true shared decision making. In 1993-94, however, this council functioned very differently with a new principal and new teacher and parent representatives. (See the section on Newtown Independent District for a discussion of the factors that influenced this change.) While none of the established councils we studied in 1993-94 appeared to have true shared decision making, several appeared to have moved along the continuum toward balanced decision making. Others appeared to have moved in the opposite direction.

In general, we found that even councils with some degree of shared decision making do not necessarily provide parents with meaningful roles. An interesting exception to this apparently occurred in three of the four study districts over the past three years. In three schools where teachers hesitated to speak freely about issues that concerned them, parent representatives on the council raised issues on their behalf.

At one school, the principal was new to the school when SBDM began, and apparently the teachers were not sure they could trust her to accept their criticisms. The first two parent representatives said that teachers had asked them to raise a number of issues the teachers felt inhibited from raising. The teachers later began to exert forceful leadership, and decision making became more shared as the council developed into an educator-dominated group. The principal was delighted, but an unanticipated effect of the change was to exclude parents even more than

before from any genuine role in decision making. Teachers appeared not to want parent input at all from this time on. One of the teachers expressed some of the faculty's distrust of parents:

> Some of our parents are sitting down there with...a high school education, and they come in and do volunteer work, and...they see things going on, but to understand the concepts...behind it, they don't.

At a school in another district, the issue on which parents took the initiative was the principal's failure to call council meetings. A parent council member became concerned about this issue and spoke to the teacher representatives, who said they were also concerned but did not feel they could approach the principal. The teachers requested that the parent talk with the principal. He did, and the principal began calling meetings more regularly.

In another district, parents had played an active role in decision making since the council began. In 1993-94 a council with completely new members became far more principal-dominated than the initial council had been. Both teachers and parents hesitated to challenge the principal directly during council meetings, but the parents were more outspoken than the teachers. The most outspoken parent said she felt she was raising issues that the teachers were too intimidated to raise themselves.

This was not a common dynamic, occurring infrequently in only a few schools where teachers were intimidated by their principals but felt they could call on parents as allies.

Factors That Facilitate or Impede SBDM

Why has SBDM brought about shared decision making at some schools and not others? We identified four critical factors that facilitate or impede effective SBDM implementation: the principal's support and facilitation of SBDM, leadership by other council members, neglect of parent involvement by educators, and council training. (These factors seem just as likely to facilitate or impede SBDM in an urban setting as in a rural setting. In fact, Flinspach & Ryan (1994) and Malen & Ogawa (1988) identified some of these same factors as impeding or facilitating shared decision making in urban districts.)

The principal's support and facilitation. Principals, as school leaders and chairs of SBDM councils, play a key role in the extent to which decision making is shared. At the schools we studied, leadership by some principals enabled teachers and parents to participate in decision making. Other principals did not provide this leadership. Principals facilitated SBDM in one of two ways: by serving as the chief advocate for SBDM at their school or by allowing others to assume leadership in decision making.

During 1992-93, the principal who led the most "balanced" council in our study facilitated SBDM implementation primarily through a nonauthoritarian management style. This

principal enabled shared decision making to occur by working with other council members as a member of the team. He did not appear to feel threatened by the strong role parents and teachers played, and he willingly shared power with the council.

Principals at two of the schools with educator-dominated councils were vocal advocates of SBDM from the start. These principals ensured that all issues that fell under the council's jurisdiction were routed through the council, carefully polled council members at meetings to make sure all opinions were heard, and helped the council work toward reaching consensus.

In contrast, some principals impeded shared decision making by dominating council discussions, bringing pre-packaged ideas to the council for their endorsement, failing to bring the council to closure on concerns raised by members or observers, withholding information needed to prepare a budget, and failing to implement council decisions.

Leadership by other council members. Although principals played a strong role in facilitating or impeding SBDM, we saw instances when leadership by other council members was the central force in bringing about shared decision making. At one school, for example, parents and teachers provided as much leadership as the principal. At another school where the principal opposed SBDM, a core group of teachers initiated the vote on SBDM and took leadership in getting the council to assume responsibility for budget management. Since that time, these teachers have continued to play a strong role in establishing a culture of shared decision making.

Neglect of parent involvement by educators. The relative lack of parent participation in SBDM is a statewide problem, as reported in another study of SBDM in Kentucky (David, 1993), and a survey conducted by the *Louisville Courier-Journal* (Schaver, 1994). While the problem may be partly due to parents not having time to participate, we have seen evidence that educators do not encourage—and in some cases, do not welcome—parent involvement. At most schools in our study, there was little ongoing effort to inform parents of how to participate in SBDM. In addition, parent council members were not provided with sufficient information to fully participate in decision making.

The lack of effort to involve parents appeared to be a matter of negligence rather than an overt attempt to thwart parent involvement. Council efforts to advertise meetings became increasingly half-hearted and intermittent at some schools, and some councils scheduled meetings for the convenience of educators rather than for working parents and community members.

There were signs of overt resistance to parent involvement at some schools. Resistance seemed to stem from educators' mistrust of parents. For example, two principals in two different districts feared that SBDM would attract parents with unreasonable demands or inadequate knowledge. These principals dismissed the topic of parent involvement at council meetings by changing the subject, offering a reason why the topic should not be dealt with, or insisting that

everything that could possibly be done to increase parent involvement had already been tried. Parent council members have been reluctant to persist in the face of such recalcitrance. A former parent council member remarked:

> I know from where I work, if you do too much ruffling, you get a label—you do everywhere in every job. I just hope it gets beyond that where people can feel comfortable saying what they think.

Council training. Our observations support the suggestions of other researchers that councils need more knowledge of group process and decision making skills, the content of many issues they face, and strategies for encouraging widespread involvement in the SBDM process (David, 1993; Weiss, Cambone, & Wyeth, 1991; Wohlstetter & Mohrman, 1993). Most of the councils we studied received training each year, but it consisted of "one-shot" workshops with no follow-up support or evaluation. In addition, turnover of council members often resulted in only the newest members participating in training. Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) point out that this sort of training is ineffective at bringing about long-term organizational change.

Some councils, however, made good use of their training even when no follow-up was provided. The council we initially identified as engaging in balanced decision making received group training early in the SBDM implementation process. Council members said this enabled them to move beyond individual differences and begin functioning as a group. This council found the training so important that the members advised their successors to receive training as a group before holding their first meeting. The new council did so, but subsequently appeared to allow the new principal to dominate many decisions.

Council Development in the Four Study Districts

What follows is a description of the major changes that appear to have taken place in each district over the past year and the factors that seem to account for them. Areas of council functioning that have not changed substantially since the 1992-93 annual report are not discussed here.

Lamont County: Western Kentucky. After two years during which the high school was the only SBDM school in the district, two of the four elementary schools voted to implement SBDM during 1993-94. Both new councils received training in SBDM from two local high school teachers who were certified as trainers by the state department of education. When one council discussed potential trainers, the principal concluded, "I think I hear most prefer to use local."

This aversion to the unfamiliar and preference for the known and trusted appears to permeate this farming district. It is reflected in the hiring practices of all three councils: if a

qualified local candidate is available, that candidate is almost always hired. Council members have made it clear that being local is considered along with other qualifications for the job.

Both of the new councils began the year with an effort to engage in shared decision making. One developed more strongly in this direction as the year progressed. The principal facilitated shared decision making by allowing time for full discussion of every issue before the council. Teacher and parent members appeared to be very comfortable expressing themselves freely and participating fully in the council's decisions.

This council appointed and defined the roles of a number of committees. It made a number of important decisions, including making rules for student discipline, discussing a system of rewards to encourage students to do their best on the state assessment, and deciding to limit the inclusion of kindergarten students in the primary program. During its first year, the council also conducted a needs survey of parents and teachers to inform the School Transformation Plan. The council itself developed the plan through a series of working meetings. In addition, when the principal resigned at the end of the year, the council hired a new principal.

The other new council evolved during 1993-94 into a principal-dominated council. The principal appeared to be very uncomfortable sharing decision making authority. He ignored council members' suggestions of topics that should be investigated or decisions that should be made and, instead, treated the council as an advisory group which should rubber-stamp his decisions.

The council appointed several committees in addition to a budget committee. At the beginning of the year, the council delegated some decisions to a schedule committee, because it felt that the committee would not have enough time to develop recommendations for the council to consider. As the year went on, a pattern developed whereby the council referred issues to committees but then failed to take action on the committees' recommendations. The council did, however, assume genuine responsibility for the instructional budget, probably because a major motive for deciding to implement SBDM had been to gain control of the school budget.

Ironically, the council at the high school, where teachers instituted SBDM in an effort to counter a weak, authoritarian principal, became somewhat more principal-dominated in 1993-94. When the principal against whom the teachers had rebelled was reassigned in 1992-93, the council hired a new principal and made it clear to him that support for SBDM was a prerequisite for the job. During 1992-93, he somewhat reluctantly shared decision making with the teacher representatives. In 1993-94, however, he became more resistant to shared decision making and frequently failed to implement council decisions. The teacher representatives (all of whom had served since 1991) were reluctant to challenge him when he failed to follow through on council decisions, perhaps because he was a "local" who was hired by the council and generally well liked.

Councils in Lamont County revealed uncertainty about efficient ways to manage school affairs, as shown by the length of council meetings and by their limited use of committees. At the principal-dominated elementary school, council meetings typically lasted an hour or less. Active councils at the other two SBDM schools held very long meetings, from two to four hours in length. (In the other three districts, meetings usually lasted one to two hours or less.) All three councils have committee structures; however, only a few of the committees are functioning effectively.

It is not surprising that complaints about the time demands of SBDM have surfaced most often in the district where SBDM required the greatest time commitment. It appears that only a small core of teachers (at least at the high school) is willing to invest the time and energy to exert leadership through SBDM. For example, some teachers and parents served three years before deciding it was time to bring new blood into the high school council. As a result of this and the hiring of a new principal, the 1994-95 council (elected in the spring of 1994) had a completely new membership.

Another factor that distinguished Lamont from the other districts was that some of the parent council members and other participants in SBDM at the two most recently organized SBDM schools were involved in an anti-KERA citizens group that developed during 1993-94. What effect this will have on the evolution of SBDM in the district is unclear.

Newtown Independent: Eastern Kentucky. As mentioned earlier in this report, neither of the Newtown school faculties voted to implement SBDM during 1991-92. As required by law, the school board appointed the elementary school to adopt SBDM. After a remarkably smooth introduction to SBDM, the mode of decision making of the elementary school council changed dramatically in 1993-94, following a complete turnover in council personnel. The way in which this turnover occurred was typical of the district. The initial council served from 1991-1992 through 1992-93 with the same membership. The principal was low-key and allowed council members to discuss issues, state motions, and come to decisions without a lot of direction from him, resulting in balanced decision making. Many people in the school and the community perceived the council as an effective group that made important decisions, and it appeared that principal, teacher, and parent members shared fairly equally in decision making. Both teacher and parent representatives were easily re-elected to their second one-year terms in 1992.

The council hired a number of new staff, including one teacher whose employment was highly controversial, because two local candidates (the daughters of district employees) lost to a better-qualified teacher who had just moved into the district. This hiring violated a long-standing norm that local educators were to be hired whenever possible, although there was a counter-vailing norm that only well-qualified people should be hired. Council members received a lot of criticism from faculty, central office administrators, and community members over this choice.

Traditionally, many decisions in Newtown are made informally by influential stakeholders long before any formal action is taken. The decisions are not secret; most school personnel seem to know about them. When the elementary school principal resigned to take a central office position at the beginning of 1993-94, the council was responsible for hiring his replacement. Council members said that a year before the principal actually moved to the central office, the superintendent informed them of the impending change and told them whom he wanted as the new principal. The council's decision making authority was further eroded when the superintendent chose not to advertise the position widely and his candidate was the only applicant. The person was hired by the council, whose members felt she was well qualified, although they would have preferred greater choice. The new principal reported that the superintendent had encouraged her to become a principal and had applauded her for obtaining the necessary administrative certification.

At the same time that the elementary school got a new principal, all the teacher and parent representatives on the council chose not to seek re-election and were replaced by three new teachers and two new parents. The new parent representatives provided leadership that persuaded about 170 parents to vote—by far the largest turnout for a parent election in any of the study districts during the past three years. (In 1994, all Newtown council members were re-elected for the 1994-95 term, although only 44 parents voted in the election.)

The new principal announced council meetings in the local newspaper and on radio and provided new council and committee members with appropriate training, but did not facilitate truly shared decision making. Her normal mode was to bring plans to the council after they were fully fleshed out and ask for the council's approval, rather than asking the council for assistance in developing policy. She generally failed to develop and disseminate agendas prior to the meetings. The three teacher representatives rarely took the initiative in bringing issues before the council, although both parent members did (especially one particularly assertive parent). (In this district, parents have traditionally been highly involved with schools.) The principal tended to state all the motions, and there was little discussion except on highly controversial issues, making this council much more principal-dominated than before.

One council member said members did have informal input into decisions, because the principal consulted them individually before bringing plans to the council. She attributed the lack of discussion at council meetings to the fact that the members already knew what was going on and the decisions had already been made. Another member refuted this, however, saying that she was not regularly consulted prior to council meetings. A third member said she did not challenge the principal's mode of operation as long as the principal's actions were taken for the good of the school (which she felt was usually the case).

There was one way in which the 1993-94 council was stronger than its predecessor: it had an active, functioning committee structure. The council had appointed committees since it began and parents had participated actively in them, but the council often made important decisions without consulting them. The council training during the summer of 1993 strongly

emphasized the importance of channeling all council decisions through committees and requiring a committee recommendation before the council voted on any policy. Early in the school year, the new principal used many of the handouts from the training during an evening training session for parent committee members.

The committees reported regularly to the council in 1993-94, and it was the Health Committee (a particularly active group) that brought the need for a school nurse to the attention of the council. This recommendation led the principal to develop a proposal for a Family Resource Center, which she hoped would include a school nurse. The actual grant writing was done by a social work intern at the school, assisted by an advisory council member from the community. The council's involvement was limited to hearing progress reports.

Other committees were also quite active. The Curriculum Committee worked hard during 1993-94, aligning the science curriculum with the state's academic expectations, and inserting references to hands-on experiments contained in science kits. After teachers pulled together the learning objectives for each grade level, parents on the committee did the bulk of the alignment work. Other committees met and made or sent reports to the council. There were often four or five committee reports per council meeting.

The council dealt with major issues, including curriculum alignment, establishing a centralized science resource room, selecting textbooks, reviewing the school improvement plan, establishing a new configuration for the primary program, and scheduling early dismissal for the entire school one day a week to allow for joint teacher planning. Lunchroom discipline was discussed frequently, but no action was taken on the matter.

A new development took place in Newtown during 1993-94. In the spring, the high school faculty voted to adopt SBDM, although they had rejected it decisively in 1991 (as had the elementary council). Several factors may have influenced their action. First, the elementary council had become well respected and had not caused problems for the faculty. Second, the superintendent resigned during the spring, effective June 30, 1994. In this district with a strong preference for promoting local employees, the faculty may have anticipated the domino effect that in fact occurred, creating a vacancy in the high school principal's position. The superintendent screening committee recommended the former elementary school principal (who now had a central office position) as one of two finalists, and the board of education hired him as the new superintendent. The high school principal moved into the central office position vacated by the new superintendent. Thus, the new high school council's first major decision, during the summer of 1994, was to hire a new principal.

This decision stirred up a great deal of controversy because, to its own surprise, the council hired an unknown young male from a nearby county school district and passed over a well-regarded, well-qualified female teacher at the high school. Council members explained that the young man's application essay and interview had been so outstanding that they were convinced he was the better candidate. Council members were heavily criticized for this choice.

All of these developments were strongly influenced by the fact that most of the actors had grown up together in a small town and knew each other very well. The elementary school council, for instance, knew exactly what it was getting when it hired the new principal: council members knew she tended to be autocratic but trusted her to make intelligent decisions and to have the children's best interests at heart. Likewise, the high school council members knew they were in for trouble with teachers and parents alike when they failed to pick the popular candidate for principal. They were well aware that formal council decision making was embedded in an entrenched system of informal community decision making, which was genteel only on the surface. (Lifelong friendships have been damaged as a result of some of these controversial decisions.)

Orange County: Eastern Kentucky. Although Orange County has implemented most KERA strands enthusiastically, only one school (the centrally located elementary school) voted to adopt SBDM in 1991-92. It remained the only SBDM school in the district until 1994. This school used SBDM as an opportunity to develop a strong system of teacher committees, which it had lacked previously, and to develop a decision making mode in which principal and teachers had fairly equal voices but parents did not participate fully. Parental participation was solicited, but parents never felt that their views were given credence by the council. This council declined in 1993-94.

At the district level, a number of previously covert political rivalries and scandals surfaced, creating a siege atmosphere for many district staff. However, 1993-94 was also a year of unprecedented activity on the SBDM front, as several schools finally responded to the board of education's policy encouraging them to adopt SBDM prior to the 1996 deadline.

The one SBDM school, which was located on the district's central campus, went through a bifurcation process this year. In previous years, the school building had undergone major renovation so that it could be used as a consolidated middle school. During 1993-94, a new elementary school was under construction on the opposite side of the county seat, and the school was preparing to become two schools in 1994-95. The plan was for most of the elementary teachers and students to move to the new elementary school (which would have somewhat different attendance boundaries than the current school). Most of the middle school teachers would be at the new middle school, working with teachers and students from all over the district.

The impact of these developments on the elementary school was severe, and the council played an increasingly minor part in the life of the school. During the preparations to open the new middle school, the status of the elementary school was unclear, morale suffered, and council members spent a lot of time discussing whether the new elementary school would be considered an entirely new school or an extension of the present one. They sent delegations to the central office to try to determine what their status would be in 1994-95. Until the board of education decided in November that the new elementary school would be a continuation of the current school, elementary teachers were afraid they would be required to re-apply for their jobs.

The process of preparing for the new middle school was also stressful for many district staff members. In this district, as in Newtown, decisions tend to be made informally well before their formal adoption. The process is often clandestine rather than open, so people frequently do not know about decisions that directly affect them until the formal decisions are made. Ironically, overt decision making processes are generally carried out precisely according to the requirements of the state department of education and KERA. However, when overt and covert decision making disagree, the primacy of hidden decision making surfaces.

At the same time, the superintendent faced a political showdown brought on by his firing of the high school principal for misuse of funds in the spring of 1993. This firing brought into the open a love/hate relationship between two extended families, both of which had been involved in education for several generations. The usual practice of informal, clandestine decision making became more and more byzantine.

Initially, it was unclear whether the elementary school principal would remain or become middle school principal. When the position of middle school principal was advertised in late 1993, there was only one applicant—an assistant principal at the high school whom the superintendent had strongly endorsed for the position. The fact that none of the elementary school principals (including the principal at the SBDM school) applied for the job strongly suggests that important pressure had been exerted behind the scenes on behalf of the only applicant.

Meanwhile, the school's middle school teachers, together with other teachers who wanted to teach in the consolidated middle school, were required to apply to teach at the middle school in 1994. The task of selecting staff took several months. Some well-respected teachers who were not sure about teaching at the new middle school—including at least one teacher who chaired a crucial SBDM committee—were actively recruited by the new principal. Others waited months to learn if their applications had been accepted.

The inevitable result of these pressures at the elementary school was that the faculty who were planning to teach at the middle school and those who expected to teach at the new elementary school began to drift apart by mid-year. The faculty continued to work as a cohesive unit in preparing students for state testing. However, the preoccupation of middle school teachers with preparations for the new school undercut committee work. For example, at the April council meeting the chairs of the two most active committees (Curriculum and Instructional Budget) were in the building but did not attend because, as middle school teachers, they gave a middle school planning meeting priority over the council meeting. The previous month, both had attended the council meeting but had reported that their committees had not accomplished enough to warrant a report. During 1993-94, some committees that previously had reported at nearly every council meeting reported less frequently. Thus, a council that had traditionally worked primarily through a strong committee system no longer had the support of key committees.

Council meetings became shorter as the year progressed. The meetings were regularly scheduled and they were also announced on a local radio station but not in the newspaper. A number of meetings were postponed or cancelled, again without newspaper notification. During the summer of 1994, while the school was in transition from one building to another, no meetings were held, although they were tentatively scheduled several times and later cancelled.

Parent participation in the council—always problematic—was neglected almost entirely. It was difficult to persuade two parents to run for the 1993-94 council, and one of the new members never attended a meeting. As called for in the bylaws, that member was asked to resign after three unexcused absences. The PTA neglected to vote, as requested, for a replacement. The principal eventually persuaded the PTA president to serve as the second parent representative, but her attendance was erratic. The one faithful parent member was an active volunteer in the primary program and a strong supporter of the principal and teachers but appeared unaware that she could or should speak up in meetings. Her opinion was never solicited by other members.

A lack of training made the parents' already difficult role even more problematic. Although the principal asked the central office to arrange for SBDM training early in the year, none was provided. Since all the 1992-93 teacher members had been re-elected, the only council members who functioned for the entire year without formal training were the two parent representatives.

While this council was in decline, new interest in SBDM surfaced in other schools. In November, the high school faculty voted to adopt SBDM, even though they had rejected it by a two-thirds margin the previous November. The new principal, who had worked with a council in the past, strongly encouraged the faculty to assume responsibility for school governance. Even before the SBDM vote, he appointed faculty committees to assist in key areas of governance, including the budget.

High school faculty and parents were unable to vote for their representatives until February 1994, largely because severe winter weather closed schools for most of January and part of February. The newly organized Parent-Teacher-Student Association (PTSA) was able to draw crowds for some events (such as awards nights for students), but the two vocal and influential parent council members were elected at a meeting attended by only seven voting participants.

The first official council meeting was held in May, with a fairly large audience that included a few parents. Commenting on the open exchange of views between all the council members and the audience, an assistant principal remarked after the meeting, "This is the best council I've seen so far." During the first two official meetings of the council, parent and faculty members continued to participate vigorously in discussions, with the parents each having an area of expertise valued by the educators. Audience members were encouraged to express their views and to raise new issues for the council to consider.

Some elementary schools also demonstrated interest in SBDM. At one, teachers petitioned to vote on SBDM. According to several sources, the teachers' primary motive was dissatisfaction with the leadership style of the principal. When the election was held in November 1993, SBDM failed by only one vote. Some district staff suspected that underhanded means were used to thwart the election.

The maneuvering was even more *sub rosa* at another, more centrally located elementary school. When the principal was transferred, a number of faculty members began to campaign for an SBDM election, with the encouragement of the outgoing principal. Several district employees said they assumed the teachers' motive was a desire to select the next principal. A petition was drawn up, but no election was held and apparently the petition was never presented to the administration, probably because it did not have enough signatures. Nevertheless, by a process very much like that required in SBDM schools, the new principal was selected by a committee of local teachers appointed by the incoming superintendent.

Perhaps the greatest irony in the political situation in Orange County during 1993-94 is that, in many ways, the district has been quite proactive in implementing KERA under the leadership of the superintendent who left office under a cloud at the end of June 1994. Student achievement soared during his tenure, most dramatically at the one SBDM school. While there are certainly factions that would prefer to slow the pace of KERA implementation or even throw it into reverse, some of those embroiled in the difficult politics of the district were clearly motivated to implement KERA and improve student achievement. One principal put this into clear perspective, expressing apprehension that the board would hire a superintendent from outside the district, because those applicants "wouldn't know how to implement KERA."

Vanderbilt County: Central Kentucky. Four of the five schools in Vanderbilt County have had SBDM councils since 1991-92. The central office and board of education encouraged early adoption of SBDM by hiring a consultant to assist a committee in developing an SBDM implementation manual and to train council members, school board members, and central office administrators in shared decision making.

In spite of this enthusiastic start, only one of the four councils (at the centrally located elementary school) was able to maintain any significant level of shared decision making over the long term. This council's first action was to hire a new principal from outside the district; the principal has demonstrated enthusiastic support of KERA in general and SBDM in particular.

The council at this school has been primarily educator-dominated since its establishment, but parents played a stronger role in 1993-94 than previously, influencing council decisions on topics about which they felt strongly. There were more parent nominees for the council and more parents voting in the election than any other council in the district in 1993-94. In addition, the council regularly advertises meetings in the local newspaper. Through most of the year, the council held meetings in the evening to accommodate interested parents. It also rearranged its seating pattern in 1993 so that council members face the audience. Audiences at council

meetings we observed in 1993-94 averaged about six, compared to fewer than three at the other SBDM schools.

This active council heard numerous reports throughout 1992-93 and 1993-94 from its committees, the most active of which were the instructional practices, scheduling, and discipline committees. The council was most active in making decisions about discipline, personnel, and scheduling.

The remaining three councils in the county—at two outlying elementary schools and the high school—initially attempted to implement SBDM through group training, frequent meetings to reach consensus on bylaws and to hire personnel, and establishment of council committees. Over time, however, all three councils slipped into a principal-dominated decision-making mode. It appears that, for the last three and one-half years, decision making has been shared among the principal and teachers, but decisions are seldom routed through the council—which leaves parents out of the loop.

During 1993-94, these schools fell along a continuum according to how active the councils were. One elementary council made a few important decisions concerning personnel and scheduling, and also reviewed its action plan and took steps to implement it in the future. The high school council met frequently and considered important topics but made few decisions, often referring major issues to committees that never reported back to the council. It did, however, hire a new principal for the 1994-95 school year. The other elementary council met infrequently (only seven times during 1993-94, for an average of half an hour), had a defunct committee system, and served mostly as a forum for the principal's announcements.

In sum, only one of the four SBDM councils in Vanderbilt County has played a significant role in school decision making since SBDM was first implemented. Several factors may have contributed to this dramatic slippage in a district that initially supported SBDM so enthusiastically. For example, it is possible that central office support for SBDM persuaded faculties and principals who did not enthusiastically support SBDM to assume governance of their schools before they were ready.

Another factor is that none of the four councils assumed responsibility for the instructional budget at its school. The superintendent, who had a reputation for optimal management of limited funds, discouraged the councils from taking on the budgeting function, and none of them did so. Since responsibility for managing the instructional budget apparently motivated other councils to make decisions that affected children directly in areas such as curriculum and scheduling, it may be that failure to manage the budget discouraged shared decision making in areas of importance to school life.

A third factor is that there appears to be general satisfaction in the district with school governance as it existed prior to KERA. Most sources agree that the superintendent, who has served for over 10 years, has fostered an environment in which teachers and principals have had

significant input into decision making. Even prior to KERA, he allowed principals to make personnel and budget decisions. This approach filtered down to the schools, where most principals have always obtained faculty input into decision making. SBDM has not supplanted the existing structure of strong faculty committees and consistent consultation.

It appears, however, that some principals have had difficulty making the leap from obtaining "input" to accepting teachers and parents as equal partners. Since inertia and general satisfaction with the existing state of affairs appear to account in part for the lack of truly shared decision making in this district, it is significant that two of the three principals with principal-dominated councils at the end of 1993-94 are native to the district and had been principals at these schools for several years.

Some parents who have served on SBDM councils have expressed satisfaction with the existing decision making structure, stating that they believe educators, as professionals, know more about what should happen at the school than parents. Others have privately complained that many decisions seem to be made in advance of the meetings. Some have attempted to question council operations, but nearly all have given up when their attempts at greater involvement have been diverted by principals. A parent council member explained:

> I think when we come to the meeting that everything is pretty much cut and dried. I think most of the decisions are already made before we get here and it's just a formality of putting it before the board. And if anybody disagrees, it seems like you're talked to and talked to until you finally say, "Well, maybe that's right...." The principal is in control and he's going to talk you around to his point of view one way or the other, or else put it on the [back] burner and let you forget about it.

Finally, it is important to note that the failure of most Vanderbilt County schools to use councils as a vehicle for major decision making is consistent with findings from other site-based management programs around the country. It appears to be very difficult for schools to make a major change in their governance structures, particularly if relations among administrators, teachers, and parents are congenial and there is already a satisfactory level of teacher input into decision making.

Decisions Councils Made

There were similarities and differences between the types of decisions the rural Kentucky councils made and those reported in research on urban councils. Unlike the Chicago school councils studied by Flinspach and Ryan (1994), the councils in our study were not bogged down in the initial stages with such issues as gang activity, school safety, overcrowding, or facility repairs and maintenance. Even so, like many of the those councils, and substantiating research reported in Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991), councils initially targeted problematic nonacademic issues such as student discipline. In their second and third years, some councils began to take

greater responsibility for issues such as curriculum and instruction. This conclusion is similar to that of David (1993), who is also studying school councils in Kentucky.

We found that councils that practiced some degree of shared decision making, whether balanced or educator-dominated, appeared to have a more global view of their role than principal-dominated councils. These councils viewed themselves (or are beginning to view themselves) as ultimately responsible for overall school functioning and for ensuring that students achieve KERA goals. These were the councils that were most likely to delve into areas such as curriculum, instruction, scheduling, and budget. Interestingly, all councils, regardless of their decision making mode, participated in decisions about personnel and, to some extent, discipline.

Personnel. All councils in our study—even those that did little else—were significantly involved in hiring decisions. The sheer quantity of hiring decisions at some schools illustrates that, over time, council involvement in hiring can strongly influence the way schools function. Four councils in three districts hired principals in the first two years of SBDM, and five councils hired principals in the summer of 1994. In a single year, one council participated in hiring an assistant principal, three teachers, an extended school coordinator, a receptionist, and several coaches.

While the principal is only required to ***consult*** with the council about hiring staff, council members at all seven schools with long-term councils said they participated in interviewing job applicants and generally reached consensus on hiring decisions. Most members we interviewed identified personnel decisions as among the most important decisions they made. Members at two schools, however, expressed frustration at not being allowed to participate in preliminary decisions, such as advertising vacancies and screening applications.

The rural, small-town environment of the four study districts affected councils' personnel decisions. Because of the districts' small size, council members typically were well acquainted with (and in some cases had worked alongside) job applicants. This contributed to the pressure many council members felt to hire local applicants.

Most teacher and parent council members at all sites said their councils hired the best-qualified applicants, even when pressured to do otherwise. Some people said hiring was more fair than it had been when superintendents and school boards were responsible for hiring decisions. In one district, for instance, two councils rejected local applicants for principal and hired applicants from outside the district whom they perceived to be better qualified. One of these principals said:

> It was wonderful. It was very fair, very open, professionally done.... A lot of places, it's the "good-old-boy" system, and if you don't know somebody in the community, you really don't stand a chance. I think it's more difficult for a woman in Kentucky without

this. This made it very, very fair. They all had their questions, they gave points for their questions, they added up the points, they tallied it.... They had a system, it was very fair.

There was evidence, however, that councils were not immune to pressure to hire local applicants. When the same two councils mentioned above later hired some of the same local applicants as assistant principals, council members at both schools reported that they felt obligated to make amends to the local applicants. Also, considerable ill feeling was created in another district when a teacher was hired from outside the district, while the hiring of the elementary school principal appeared to be dictated entirely by the superintendent, and was supported by strong local norms. Teacher council members at two schools reported that they had been criticized by colleagues and administrators for not hiring local applicants, and a parent council member in one district reported being ostracized by other community members after voting for a nonlocal candidate. Thus, it appears that schools are subject to the same political pressure many rural school boards experienced when they were responsible for hiring decisions.

Discipline. In addition to personnel decisions, all councils in our study since 1991-92 assumed responsibility for developing school discipline policies. Policies developed by councils during 1991-92, when a temporary ban on corporal punishment was in effect statewide, generally included the option of assigning students to programs such as after-school or Saturday detention or in-school suspension. After the ban expired in 1992-93, councils at five schools (in all four districts) considered the possibility of reinstating corporal punishment. Two councils did so. One school board denied a request by two councils to reinstate corporal punishment, and in another district a council discussed the issue throughout the year but eventually let the matter drop.

In some places, council development and management of discipline policies created a public forum that would most likely not have existed in the absence of SBDM. At one school, for instance, the revision of the discipline policy was delayed for a month when parents expressed concern that it was too lax. A small group of parents attended the discipline committee meeting at which the policy was to be revised, and a larger number attended the council meeting at which the final policy was approved. Parent input into this issue resulted in a reduction in the number of student offenses leading to an office referral.

In contrast, another council in the same district initially practiced shared decision making but evolved into the principal-dominated mode. The council's discipline committee, which included teachers, students, and parents, developed a policy in 1991-92 that established an in-school suspension program. When the council hired a new principal in 1992-93, one of his first actions was to replace the suspension program with an after-school detention program. He said he consulted teachers about the change. Teachers and parents on the council reported that they were happy with the change, but that it was never discussed or approved by the council. Thus, no public forum was provided for parents to give input.

Budget. The council that practiced balanced decision making in 1992-93, as well as two of the three educator-dominated councils, assumed responsibility for managing their schools' instructional budgets. At a high school with an educator-dominated council, the lure of managing the school budget was a partial incentive to vote for SBDM, because teachers were unhappy that the principal did not share budget information or procedures with them.

Budgeting was one of the first tasks addressed by this council. A finance committee was formed to develop the budget, and the committee advertised all meetings in the local newspaper. Draft copies of the budget were shared at a faculty meeting. Although the council struggled with the principal over other issues, management of the budget enabled it to exercise the authority granted it by KERA, and apparently contributed to the development of a school culture in which shared decision making is now considered the norm.

The two new elementary school councils in the same district have also assumed responsibility for the instructional budget; apparently, this has not been problematic at either school. SBDM participants at one of them (which has evolved into a principal-dominated council) said their primary reason for voting to adopt SBDM was to have control over the school budget. At the other school, the council appointed a finance committee to develop the 1994-95 budget rather than to deal with the 1993-94 budget.

Budget management was not a divisive issue at the elementary schools in the two eastern Kentucky districts, where principals supported council management of the budget. Budgets were developed each year, and councils approved teachers' purchase requests. At the other school with an established council, the problems the council had in allocating funds in a way that was perceived as fair appear to have been solved this year, as all the teachers we interviewed there said the process was fair.

The authority to make budget decisions also empowered councils to play the central role in school change. Approval of teachers' purchase requests familiarized councils and their budget committees with materials and strategies teachers were using to implement KERA initiatives such as the ungraded primary program, portfolios, and the teaching of real-life tasks and problem-solving skills.

School schedules. Three councils, one balanced and two educator-dominated, made decisions about school schedules. At the elementary level, two councils' scheduling committees developed the schedule each year. A principal who led an elementary school council in 1992-93 reported that the committee prepared the schedule much earlier in the year than he had. The committee included joint teacher planning time in the daily schedule so that every teacher could plan with special area teachers at least once a week. Teachers generally reported satisfaction with the work of the council.

At an elementary school in another district, the schedule approved by the council in 1991-92 created some conflict when the council was forced to cut back on music instruction because

music classes were too large. This cutback resulted in a loss of teacher planning time, and council members reported that colleagues criticized them about this. Since that time, teachers reported general satisfaction with the council's efforts to provide blocks of planning time, and to accommodate teachers who wished to plan together. This council modified the 1993-94 schedule to give fourth-grade teachers a larger block of instructional time in the morning, in the hope that this would improve students' performance on the state assessment.

A high school council obtained faculty approval to move to a seven-period day for the 1993-94 school year in order to offer chemistry to all students who signed up for the course. In 1993-94, after receiving numerous faculty complaints that teachers did not have enough time to prepare for classes and that class periods were too short to engage students in in-depth study, the council adopted a four-period day for 1994-95.

Curriculum and instruction. While the councils in our study were slow to consider curriculum and instruction issues, councils that practiced balanced or educator-dominated decision making were more likely to make decisions that affected instruction and to monitor and modify these decisions as necessary. Principal-dominated councils tended to make curriculum and instruction decisions only when required and typically did not follow up on them.

Primary program: The state department of education required councils to approve plans for the KERA-mandated nongraded primary program. This led three of the five elementary school councils—one balanced, one educator-dominated, and one principal-dominated—to assign the task to committees. At the other two schools, councils merely signed off on plans developed by the primary program teachers.

Since then, two councils in different districts have continued to assume responsibility for modifications to the primary program plans. For example, one of these councils received permission from the school board to adjust the beginning and ending times of the primary school day in 1992-93 in order to give teachers more planning time. When teachers requested that this continue in 1993-94, parent council members held a meeting for parents of primary students to obtain their input. The night of the vote on the issue, parent members presented the council with a list of concerns. The council voted to continue the early beginning and early dismissal for primary students, but addressed parent concerns about lack of after-school supervision by agreeing to house students in the cafeteria, library, or computer room until parents arrived to pick them up. The primary teachers asked the council to allow dual-age classrooms (K/1 and 2/3) rather than the more multiaged classes they had taught in 1992-93. After much discussion (including possible financial ramifications), the council approved dual-age classrooms.

Math instruction: At two high schools in different districts, it was brought to the councils' attention that many students were failing college-prep math courses. In both cases, there were indications that the problem was the teaching methods of certain teachers. Because council members knew they had no authority to transfer teachers and were reluctant to confront individuals about their methods, they attempted indirect solutions.

At one school in 1992-93, the principal recommended offering "basic" (lower-level) college-prep math courses to enable students having difficulty in math to meet college entrance requirements. Some council members questioned this solution because they felt it did not address the underlying instructional problems and because they feared it was not in line with KERA expectations. A parent council member said, "We're watering it down and letting the teacher not teach to the student that way." Nevertheless, the council went along with the principal and approved three levels of math courses: a college-prep track, a "basic" college-prep track, and a noncollege track. Interestingly, this council discontinued tracking in English and social studies classes, as requested by these two departments.

The council at the other school, where decision making was principal-dominated, directed the math department in 1992-93 to conduct a self-study. The resulting report identified the teaching of problem solving as a deficit area. The department issued a one-page handout to all faculty members on how to teach problem-solving skills. No further action was taken until a different set of parents voiced the same complaint at a council meeting early in the 1993-94 school year. Teachers on the council expressed uncertainty about what parents expected the council to do about the problem. Before the meeting ended, the principal said he would meet with the math department himself and report to parents at the next meeting. Minutes from the next meeting show that the principal informed the council that he had met with the district instructional supervisor and the concerned parents. The council secretary reported that the principal and district instructional supervisor convinced the parents that the students' failure was caused by inadequate preparation prior to high school or by students signing up for courses that were too advanced for them.

Response to assessment results. The release of preliminary state assessment results in the fall of 1993 spurred the councils with relatively balanced or educator-dominated decision making into taking greater responsibility for curriculum and instruction. For example, one elementary school council planned a curriculum workday in which teachers at all grade levels coordinated instructional units. The council is now working on aligning the curriculum with state standards.

Two councils began developing schoolwide plans for improving student assessment scores (and one council already had such a plan). The School Transformation Plan Committee appointed by the council at one school coordinated efforts to identify weaknesses and develop plans to overcome them. At this school, observations during 1993-94 revealed that students at the accountable grade levels frequently rehearsed the sorts of tasks required by KIRIS testing, while other students also were held accountable by the district for their portfolios (which were graded) and engaged in many tasks consistent with KIRIS.

A council in another district developed a plan to help teachers learn instructional methods in line with the KERA assessment, such as how to write, teach, and score open-ended questions. Another council in the same district played a major role in developing the school's transformation plan, which is designed to improve KIRIS scores. At a high school in a third

district, school improvement meetings were held for various groups, including the council, teachers at each grade level, noncertified employees, and parents. School improvement suggestions from all groups were given to the SBDM curriculum committee for prioritization. The committee announced in February 1994 that it would begin work on curriculum alignment, using the state's model curriculum framework.

At schools with principal-dominated councils, there appeared to be no cohesive effort underway by the council to improve or maintain student performance on the assessment. In fact, one council discussed developing a School Transformation Plan and decided not to do so, since the state did not require it. (The principal, however, did take steps to improve assessment results, and informed the council of his actions.) Another council discussed techniques for improving assessment results, but actual strategies were apparently devised during faculty meetings.

Discussion

School-based decision making as mandated by KERA provides school councils with considerable authority to make decisions. In addition, the existence of SBDM councils (when there is sufficient public information about and interest in SBDM) creates a public forum that enables all persons affected by school policies to have input into the policies. Whether or not this input is incorporated into policies depends upon the extent to which decision making is actually shared.

We found no major differences in how SBDM played out in rural as compared to urban settings, other than the types of issues on which councils focused, and the role small community size played in councils' personnel decisions. Like councils in urban settings, some councils in this study took advantage of their new authority and the opportunity for input to become important decision makers at their schools. Other councils played only a minor role.

Even when councils exercised considerable authority, however, parents were often on the fringes of decision making. It appears that extra effort is required to enlist parent involvement where such involvement is not part of the school's tradition. This is more true than ever in the current economic climate, in which a very large percentage of parents work outside the home. If parents are to participate fully in SBDM, educators must learn to share their expertise and parents must assert their right to the knowledge they need for full participation. Both parties must be willing to spend the time and energy necessary to bring all council members up to the knowledge level needed to make policy decisions.

We found that shared decision making is most likely to occur in schools where principals facilitate SBDM and where parents receive assistance in participating in decision making. We also noted instances where SBDM was effectively implemented when parents and/or teachers took the initiative to assert themselves and make their voices heard.

These preliminary data suggest that councils that practice shared decision making view themselves as responsible for overall school functioning. These councils are likely to expand their operations into areas that directly affect students, such as budgeting, curriculum, and instruction. In addition, councils that manage the budget have a more global view of their role in the school and in KERA implementation. Thus, budget management may serve as a vehicle for moving councils into more extensive decision making.

A question that remains unanswered is the long-term impact of council decisions on school performance. It is clear that the impact of SBDM on schools cannot be properly assessed until it is first determined that councils are actually making decisions. It is not sufficient to accept at face value that SBDM schools are operating under a true shared decision making model, because councils may be serving as rubber stamps for principals.

In the case of Kentucky schools, many of the activities reported above—such as curriculum alignment and development of nongraded primary programs—have been and will be performed by school faculties and/or principals regardless of whether SBDM is in place, because KERA requires that these things be done. It remains to be seen whether or not the plans, policies, and programs developed by councils are more effective at improving student achievement than those developed by principals or teachers alone.

FAMILY RESOURCE AND YOUTH SERVICES CENTERS (FRYSCs)

Because only one of the four study districts had received grants for either family resource centers (FRCs) or youth services centers (YSCs), inquiry into this aspect of KERA implementation was limited this year.

Summary of Major Findings

- A number of factors appeared to account for the success of Orange County in obtaining centers when none of the other three districts had them:

  — The district developed proposals for all schools as soon as the state began holding competitions for centers and has strengthened and resubmitted the nonwinning proposals each year.

  — The district has the largest proportion of "at-risk" students of any study district, and so was able to demonstrate considerable need for centers.

  — Since 1992, proposals have been developed at the school level, rather than the central office level, although the central office has encouraged and coordinated school efforts.

  — Two of the initial centers in Orange County quickly developed statewide reputations for excellence, which may have influenced raters to give the district credit for its ability to operate and support centers. The directors of these centers both had many years of experience on the district staff, were enthusiastic, and were proactive in developing a variety of programs in addition to those supported by the initial grants.

- The fact that Orange County has had a number of centers for several years has encouraged the development of a strong network of center directors, which was very helpful to the two new center directors in 1993-94.

- There is evidence that implementation of FRYSCs varies considerably among schools in Orange County, even with considerable coordination of programs through the center directors' network.

- Very few people in the Lamont County, Newtown Independent, and Vanderbilt County districts have expressed strong interest in centers or recognized that centers might help address some of their schools' problems. In Newtown a key respondent felt

that centers simply duplicated existing services and were "an experiment in social engineering."

- Lack of space for centers in the schools of Lamont, Newtown, and Vanderbilt districts has hampered planning for centers in those districts.

- Misinformation and lack of information about the availability of funds has discouraged planning for centers in Lamont, Newtown, and Vanderbilt districts.

Overview of the Law

Family resource centers and youth service centers are a unique feature of KERA. Located in or near schools, they ensure that needy children and families receive services to address problems that prevent children from doing their best in school. Such centers are being discussed across the nation, but only Kentucky is implementing them statewide.

The Centers

KERA mandates that family resource centers be located in or near all elementary schools in which 20 percent or more of the student body is eligible to receive free school meals, while youth services centers are to be located in or near middle and high schools that meet the same criteria.

Family resource centers must address, but are not limited to, the following components:

- assistance with full-time child care for children ages two and three;

- assistance with after-school child care for children ages four through twelve;

- health and education services for new and expectant parents;

- education to enhance parenting skills and education for parents of preschoolers and their children;

- support and training for child day care providers; and

- health services or referral to health services, or both.

Youth services centers must address, but are not limited to, the following components:

- health services or referral to health services;
- referral to social services;
- employment counseling, training, and placement for youth;
- summer and part-time job development for youth;
- substance abuse services or referral to such services; and
- family crisis and mental health counseling or referral.

Timelines

KERA required that local districts develop initial plans for the centers by June 30, 1991, and that centers be established in or near one-fourth of eligible schools by June 30, 1992. Remaining centers were to be phased in over a five-year period.

Because funds have been more limited than initially anticipated, the centers have been phased in more gradually than provided for in KERA. During the 1991-92 school year, there were 133 centers; in 1992-93, there were 222 centers (127 FRCs, 55 YSCs, and 40 combined FRYSCs). In 1993-94, 373 centers served 638 schools (57 percent of eligible schools) around the state. Of the 373 centers, 226 were FRCs, 88 were YSCs, and 59 were combined FRYSCs.

During this study, the director of Student and Family Support Services at the state department of education assured researchers that the state plans to fund all eligible centers in the next biennium. Senate Bill 53 (signed into law by the governor in April 1994) required the FRYSC implementation plan to be amended to include two additional years and extended the Interagency Task Force implementing that plan through 1997 rather than 1995.

As of December 1994, there will be 455 centers in place serving 752 schools: 268 FRCs, 112 YSCs, and 75 FRYSCs. In January 1995, 23 new centers will be added, for a total of 478 centers serving 782 schools: 281 FRCs, 122 YSCs, and 75 FRYSCs (Cabinet for Human Resources, personal contact, 12/9/94).

Funding

Since centers were first initiated in 1991-92, grants have been awarded on a competitive basis with no school receiving less than $10,000 or more than $90,000. There is a funding

formula based solely on the number of children eligible for free meals. The state Cabinet for Human Resources administers the grants, although school districts apply for them and administer the funds. Human Resources staff, assisted by the department of education's Regional Service Centers, monitor the centers and hold networking meetings for center staff.

Methodology

This study draws on one formal interview with each of the five current center directors in Orange County. These interviews also included informal discussions with the full-time nurses and clerical staff at two elementary centers. We also asked about FRYSCs in interviews conducted with superintendents, principals, teachers, parents, and students. Table 9 lists these interviews:

Table 9

Interviews Concerning FRYSCs (other than center directors)

	Central Office/ Board	Principal	Teacher	Parent	Student	Other
Lamont County	0	4	1	1	1	-
Newtown Independent	2	2	1	2	0	-
Orange County	0	-	-	-	-	-
FRC 1	-	1	2	1	1	1
FRC 2	-	-	1	-	-	-
FRC 3	-	-	-	-	-	-
FRC 4	-	1	2	-	1	2
YSC	-	-	-	-	-	-
Schools without ctrs.	1	2	3	-	-	-
Vanderbilt County	2	3	5	4	0	-

We recorded discussions of FRYSCs at meetings in each district. There were written reports from the FRC director at almost all council meetings at one Orange County school during 1993-94 and an extended discussion of the FRC proposal for refunding. FRCs or YSCs were discussed at one high school council meeting and one principals' meeting in Lamont County, as well as during one SBDM training session. The school's FRC application was discussed at three elementary council meetings in Newtown. FRYSCs were discussed at two council meetings in

Vanderbilt County (one at the high school and one at an elementary school that did not submit a proposal this year) and at one school board meeting.

This report is also based on analysis of 27 stories or advertisements in the weekly newspaper which serves Orange County. Information was also gathered from several interviews with state-level staff, documentation of state board of education meetings, a legislative subcommittee meeting, and state-level documents.

Current Status of Centers in the Districts

Orange County currently has seven centers. Two FRCs and one YSC have existed since 1991-92, two FRCs opened in July 1993, and two new FRCs opened at the beginning of the 1994-95 school year. A YSC proposal was submitted for the new district middle school (which was scheduled to open in August 1994) but it was not funded.

Vanderbilt County has no centers but has submitted two proposals. A proposal for a joint FRC to serve two small schools was rejected in the spring of 1993. A proposal was submitted in the spring of 1994 for a FRYSC to serve both the junior/senior high school and an elementary school on the same campus. The FRYSC proposal was also not funded.

Newtown Independent staff have demonstrated very little interest in FRYSCs. However, the Newtown Elementary School council identified a need for more health services, and school staff felt they would be required to have a center by 1996. The principal developed and submitted an FRC proposal in the spring of 1994. The proposal was rejected.

Lamont County has submitted no proposals. During 1993-94, the superintendent asked each school in the district to develop an FRC or YSC proposal. No proposals, however, have been submitted to the state.

Discussion of Major Findings

Orange County

Background. Over the years, the Orange County central office staff have placed a high priority on FRYSCs, consulted closely with the Frankfort FRYSC staff, and encouraged schools to spend the time and effort necessary to document needs carefully and develop center programs that reflect the needs and desires of their communities.

The three centers funded in 1992 appeared to be in those schools with the greatest needs and those with the most careful planning process in developing the grant proposal. The man who became the YSC director wrote two of these proposals. He already had close working relationships with most of the social service and health agencies in the area, as an outgrowth of summer youth development jobs he had held. The third winning grant was written by a committee of teachers and parents. A central office staff person was given the responsibility for providing technical assistance and information to these school-based efforts. The central office has continued to provide information and encouragement to those schools whose applications were not funded, to help them improve and resubmit their applications each year until they were funded.

An interagency agreement with most of the area health and social service agencies (21 agencies in 1993-94) applies to all centers in the district, in accordance with a strong district ethos that all schools should be treated equally. The center directors worked together closely from the beginning, in spite of competition between the two most active and successful directors. Both the YSC and one of the FRCs received statewide attention, but, of the two, the FRC was more visible.

In spite of the rivalry between two of the three center directors, the directors stayed in close communication and developed common programs. For example, they cooperated for several years in sponsoring a clothing giveaway just prior to the beginning of the school year. In 1993, with the addition of two new centers, this event was quite elaborate and included a health fair and a number of "fun" activities to attract a large crowd. The centers cooperated on other activities throughout the school year, including a "family week" during which a local photographer offered a reduced price to take pictures of family groups. The centers later gave the pictures to families as Christmas presents. The centers also shared donations from a national charity. There were many other instances of cooperation between individual centers, such as a new FRC participating in the summer recreational program of an established FRC, thereby sharing costs and allowing for a more ambitious program than previously.

Center programs. All centers in Orange County have advisory councils made up of parents, the school principal, teachers, and representatives of local health and social service agencies. All directors report that they keep council members well-informed about activities, new grant applications, and the like, but all have had some difficulty scheduling regular council meetings since the members are usually quite busy. On the average, councils met in 1993-94 about every two or three months, but it was not always easy to schedule even that many meetings. Most council members have been supportive and helpful; physicians and dentists on these councils frequently provide free screenings or reduced-cost services to the students at the school. However, one council member (a principal) has been reported to be obstructive. Also, a parent member of another advisory council reported that she had not yet attended a council meeting and knew very little about the FRC (casting some doubt on the director's report that she kept council members well-informed).

There were similarities among the programs offered by the various centers, in part because needs assessments revealed similar needs and in part because of the ongoing coordination among center directors. In 1993-94 all five FRCs in the district had full-time directors and full-time nurses, in addition to some clerical staff. All offered some health services directly through the school nurses and referred students who needed services that the nurses could not provide directly to providers who offered reduced-rate services. All were able to pay for these services, including eyeglasses and dental work, if the students' families were unable to pay. All of the centers maintained stocks of used clothing for families in need and for students who soiled their clothing during the school day. Most maintained at least small food pantries to meet emergency needs, and all were able to buy food if it was needed on an emergency basis. All centers referred students and their families to local health and social service agencies and monitored them to make sure the services were actually made available. For example, if transportation was not otherwise available, the centers provided it. All provided some educational and recreational programs for parents.

FRC programs. One FRC director has proactively sought grants in addition to the basic FRC grant to initiate programs needed by local families, such as providing day care for very young children and after-school day care before most centers were able to do so. The center has continued that trend this year by adding several new programs: a training grant for child care workers and a catalog program through which the center receives supplies, such as barrettes, shampoo, pencils, or baseball cards, for use as prizes at recreational events for families. During the year the center applied for three grants: a "wraparound program" to provide services for children who do not fit neatly into the categories now served, a grant to provide more space so that infants and toddlers can be cared for separately from the preschool children and to provide more staff to work with babies, and a grant to buy locking cabinets in which to store materials for the after-school day care program.

Because this center was one of the first in the area and was able to provide day care within a year of opening, the local expectation was that any FRC would provide day care. The program provides more day care services than any other FRC in the district, including after-school, preschool, and infant and toddler care. Although none of the schools' original needs surveys (asking parents to list their needs in priority order, prior to applying for a center) indicated that day care was a high priority, the day care programs have been extremely popular. The director reported this year that the waiting list is now so long that some parents have signed up their unborn children.

Both directors of centers that opened in 1993 want to provide day care. One FRC was able to open an after-school day care program during the spring of 1994, after less than a year of operation, and hoped to find grant money for a preschool day care program during the 1994-95 school year. The other FRC director is trying to work toward opening an after-school day care program during the 1994-95 school year.

The smallest original FRC has funds for a day care program in its budget but has never been able to establish that enough families need the service to justify a program. This FRC is in the rural area of the county with the highest unemployment rate, and it may well be that most families have at least one adult available to provide child care during working hours. This program has been able to use the funds saved by not providing day care to meet other needs such as food, clothing, and health care. The program, which started with a half-time director and half-time nurse, now employs both fulltime. The center has never sought grants in addition to its basic FRC funding, and the director did not report any plans to seek extra funding in 1994.

YSC programs. The high school YSC provided services in all the areas specified in KERA: health services (including a program for pregnant students and new mothers) and referral to health agencies; referral to social services; employment counseling, training, and placement; summer and part-time job development for youth (including sponsorship of a Job Training Partnership Act program); substance abuse counseling and referral to substance abuse programs; and family crisis/mental health counseling and referral.

The YSC has added new programs each year, many with grants in addition to the basic grant, to meet newly identified needs. Currently the YSC employs 10-11 full-time and part-time employees: the director, two counselors in addition to a substance abuse counselor, two secretaries, and student helpers from JTPA (regular JTPA students during the school year, four college-bound JTPA students during the summer). Part of three salaries is provided by the board of education. This is a considerable increase over the four original staff. Since the center began in 1991, it has added "about 45 new programs" according to the director. In addition, the director said that the center brought in about $4,000 more this year than last. During 1993-94, the basic YSC funding was at the maximum level of $90,000. The initial $90,000 YSC grant generated at least $130,000 in additional services to at-risk high school students during 1993-94.

The YSC director was particularly proud of his ability to prove that some students have graduated from high school who would not have graduated without help from the center:

> And I think probably one of the most heartwarming things, we'll have five or six kids that will graduate because of what the center has done for them. We can tangibly look at those students and see that we have done—[things] like correspondence courses. We have five students that were half a credit short; we got them correspondence courses, seven to eight weeks, so they will graduate.... A lot of times, if you don't graduate, you don't go on. And we're working next year to expand our programs to work with the local vocational institute and other schools to make sure our kids go to college and [other postsecondary institutions].

He said this was about the second year the center had given students the opportunity to finish school on time through correspondence courses:

> We graduated six students last year...and we graduated four or five this year, I think; we've got one waiting on the test score. But it's tangible proof you can get kids through school.... There's no need to go through the whole summer, when they can work—or sometimes they just drift away and you never see them again.

The director also pointed out that many of the center programs "blend in" with other objectives of the school. For example, a "Jobs for Kentucky Graduates" program strengthens the Tech Prep program already in existence at the high school. He summarized: "You know...it all works together." He felt the Tech Prep program was working very well for the high school students in general and helping them focus on careers, letting them know that "there's something out there for what they do." The director pointed out that the local vocational school is also part of the Tech Prep program, and added that a local manufacturing company may build a high tech center in the community, which would strengthen the program by providing technologically sophisticated jobs for high school graduates.

Personnel changes. There were three new FRC directors in 1993-94, a new director of the smallest FRC and directors at the two new centers.

The qualifications of the new directors were very different from those of the original center directors, all of whom had worked for a number of years in the district and had administrative certification. One new director (male) had less than a college degree and had worked previously as an aide at the school. Another director (female) had just completed training in primary education but had not yet done the required supervised internship year; she took the FRC position only after she failed to get a teaching job in the district, and made it clear that she would leave the directorship when she got a teaching job, since she needed the intern year to receive K-4 certification.

The director at the other new FRC had worked for a number of years as a Social Services caseworker and was known at the school because she worked with many of the school's children. As the only center director with a social work rather than an education background, she provided a link to social services and health agencies that the other directors valued. However, she was placed in the position of having no peers on the school staff and of finding herself an outsider to a strong group of teachers.

The three new directors all reported that they received invaluable help from the two established directors, who saved them from learning their jobs through trial and error. One new center director felt that there were some basic injustices in salaries, with the male directors being favored over the female. (It was not possible to corroborate the story.)

Center problems. From several sources, we learned that the smallest center has never been as active as the other two original centers. Since the center now has a full-time director and a fulltime nurse, it is able to offer more services than previously, but there do not appear to be any plans to expand the types of services beyond those already offered. In fact, because the center will lose part of its basic funding in 1994-95 when the seventh- and eighth-graders move to a new middle school, some services may be cut.

While the FRC with the director whose background was social services was an important priority of the principal and counselor at that school, that director has been hampered by a lack of professional peers. Some of the primary and elementary teachers have strongly supported the FRC program, but some of the middle school teachers have been very suspicious of it. There has been at least one schoolwide meeting to attempt to deal with differences in perception of the appropriate role for the FRC.

The new director who has had the most difficult time, however, has been the female director who still needs her internship year. According to several sources, her principal did not want the FRC program but bowed to central office pressure and allowed a grant proposal to be written for the center. While the principal has not hindered the director from carrying out the programs called for in the grant, he has inhibited the director's attempts to develop new programs or to engage in activities not specified in the grant.

Most FRC directors reported that middle school children made considerably less use of center services than the younger children. They attributed this to the growing independence of children as they get into the middle school years. Another example of this independence is children's reluctance to have their parents visit the school. Since the YSC at the high school has had a great deal of success in convincing even older children to take advantage of its services (as a primary teacher pointed out during a discussion of the issue), it may be significant that the YSC program is designed primarily to provide services to students, whereas the FRC program is designed to provide services to the child's entire family.

Principals at the two schools that did not receive grants until the spring of 1994 resented the fact that they were the last to get centers. Both felt that they had submitted good proposals that covered all the required information (even though at least one had been told the proposal lacked a required section). One of these schools will not have sufficient space for an FRC until the 1994-95 school year, when all middle school students will be transferred to a new middle school. However, space was not a problem for the other school.

Three Districts Without Centers

In none of the three districts without centers was there a widespread conviction that the district needed FRYSCs. In Lamont and Vanderbilt counties, for example, several school councils identified problems that centers are designed to address (for example, family problems

causing behavior problems in school) but never discussed the possibility that a center might help. In Lamont County several parents persisted in asking school councils to apply for FRYSCs, but the educators on the councils ignored these suggestions.

A few school staff members in each district said they thought a center was needed, but there was no concerted effort to obtain one. For example, a school board member in Newtown Independent district pointed out:

> In a small community we've already got a lot of those services being provided by providers here in the community, and I don't see that it would serve much of a purpose. In a rural setting, you know, I guess it would make sense more to me.

A principal in Lamont County used a specific crisis (an incest case) to explain why he thought an FRC would do no good: he felt that nothing could be done about "really bad family situations," though he added that it might help if the school had a counselor.

Several practical problems inhibited schools' ability to write applications for FRYSCs. In all three districts, respondents cited lack of space in the schools as a problem. In one recent application, the proposed space was about half a mile from the school buildings and adjacent to the district alternative school for students with behavior problems.

Another problem was a shortage of grant writers and confusion about the procedure for developing proposals. In Lamont County a very common complaint was that the central office had so few staff that no one had the time to write proposals. While two new central office staff people in 1993-94 were assigned to write proposals for part of their time, no FRYSC grants were written. In Vanderbilt County, the person who was responsible for developing the most recent FRYSC grant was a central office staff person. In both of these districts, grant writing was perceived as solely a central office function, although the Vanderbilt central office worked with a school-level committee to define needs. In Newtown, the elementary school principal assigned a social work intern the task of writing the proposal. A community member on the advisory council worked with the intern, but the site-based council had little involvement. The questionnaire distributed to parents to determine needs for an FRC also included many items concerning school functioning in general, such as the parents' preferences for configuration of the primary program.

Misinformation or lack of information about the FRYSC program also played a role in the three districts that do not have centers. In Lamont County one of the councils was informed that if it did get an FRC grant the funding would stop in a few years and it would not be able to keep the program going. In all three districts, some school staff were informed during the fall of 1993 that the state did not have enough funding to give grants to any new centers. AEL checked out this rumor with state department of education and was assured that the state did have money for additional centers and intended to fund all eligible centers in the next biennium.

In Newtown, the new superintendent urged schools to apply for centers now, because they would be required to have them by 1996 but would have to fund them out of district funds if they waited until the last minute. Some of these opinions may prove to be correct, but such decisions have clearly not been made at the state level, even though our informants cited sources in Frankfort. The amount of misinformation about FRYSCs in these three districts contrasts markedly with the amount of accurate information available in Orange County and suggests that the district staff were not making an aggressive effort to get accurate information, which left them susceptible to rumors.

Discussion

The general lack of interest in FRYSCs in all but the neediest district in the study suggests that integrated services may not be perceived as a great need in small rural districts that do not have high poverty rates. There may not be enough existing services in these districts to be perceived as worth integrating. There may also be a rural ethic of independence and reliance on family and neighbors rather than government that makes it difficult for local people to acknowledge unmet needs. Or it may simply be that it is particularly difficult in rural areas to institute a program of integrated services such as the FRYSCs.

In Newtown, it is possible to argue that FRYSCs duplicate existing services. In Orange County, some of these same concerns were expressed, but a large majority felt that FRYSCs were badly needed and are a great success. In Orange County, however, the schools that received centers in 1993 have (in general) not supported them as well as the first schools to receive them, as demonstrated by two of the schools' hiring of inexperienced directors.

KERA FUNDING IN 1993-94

Summary of Major Findings

- The KERA funding formula has increased funds for education and brought about a great deal of equalization both across the state and in the four study districts.

- Given the state budget shortfall, education funding in Kentucky has fared relatively well. Basic public school funding was increased substantially for the 1994-96 biennium, as was funding for family resource and youth services centers, technology, and professional development.

- Among the study districts, Orange County, because of its low property wealth and moderately high local tax effort, has benefitted the most from the state funding formula.

- Sources in three of the four districts report that instructional allocations over the past four years have provided enough funding to meet nearly all classroom instructional needs. Only in Lamont County were there reports that teachers need more classroom materials.

- Sources in all districts identified expensive items that are still needed, such as additional central office staff, teachers, instructional assistants, and technology.

- Sources indicated that state funding for the extended school program and professional development has been adequate, while local funds must be used to supplement gifted education, technology, and family resource and youth services centers.

- Sources in the districts that have received the largest increase in state funding (Orange County and Vanderbilt County) have continued to have the most positive attitudes toward the KERA funding formula, although attitudes in Vanderbilt County have moderated in recent years as funding leveled off. Lamont County sources continue to report that funding is inadequate, but their frustration does not appear as severe as it was immediately after KERA passed. Newtown respondents continue to harbor deep resentment that the KERA funding measures have resulted in a loss of competitive advantage for their district.

Overview of the Law

The SEEK Program

KERA established a new funding formula entitled "Support Education Excellence in Kentucky" (SEEK), which is made up of several components designed to equalize education funding around the state.

Guaranteed amount of money per pupil. The SEEK formula guarantees each district a base amount of money per pupil, with additional funds (add-ons) to cover the costs of transportation and of educating at-risk students, exceptional children, and students in the home/hospital program. Table 10 shows the guaranteed base amount for each school year since the passage of KERA.

Table 10

SEEK Guaranteed Base Amount Per Pupil

1990-91	$2,305
1991-92	$2,420
1992-93	$2,420
1993-94	$2,495

The adjusted guaranteed base amount (base plus add-ons) is reached by requiring districts to levy a minimum equivalent tax rate of 30 cents per $100 of assessed value of property and motor vehicles in the district. Districts may raise those revenues by levying one or more of the following: a general property tax, motor vehicle tax, occupational tax, utility tax, or excise tax on income. If a local board fails to set a rate of at least 30 cents, members can be removed from office. In addition, all real property throughout the state was required to be assessed at 100 percent of its fair cash value by July 1, 1994. Revenue produced locally by the 30 cent rate is deducted from the guaranteed amount, and the state makes up the difference—called "equalizing."

> EXAMPLE: A fictitious Kentucky district, Wilson County, has no add-ons for exceptional, at-risk, and home/hospital students or transportation (an unrealistic situation). The district's guaranteed base amount for 1993-94 was therefore $2495 per pupil. If the assessed property value were $110,000 per pupil, a 30 cent tax rate would generate $330 per pupil. The state would then provide an additional $2165 to reach the $2495 guaranteed base.

Tier I. Local school boards may generate additional revenue by increasing their tax rate to provide as much as 15 percent above the guaranteed SEEK base (with add-ons included). The state will equalize the increase in districts where the per pupil property assessment is less than 150 percent of the statewide average. This amount was $225,000 for the 1990-92 biennium and $280,000 for the 1992-94 biennium. Districts with an assessed property value per pupil at this level or higher receive no equalizing funds from the state regardless of how high they raise taxes. (Districts can also elect to move only partially into Tier I. They will receive "equalizing" funds from the state pro rata.)

> EXAMPLE: Wilson County, with its guaranteed base of $2495, is permitted to provide up to $374 more per pupil (15 percent of $2495) in Tier I by increasing

local taxes. Since the district's assessed property value per pupil is less than $280,000, the state will provide part of this $374. To determine the ratio of local to state Tier I funding, the per pupil assessed property value of $110,000 is divided by $280,000 to produce a ratio of 11/28. This means that the local district will provide $147 per pupil and the state will provide $227, for the per pupil Tier I total of $374.

Tier II. Districts may increase their tax rate to provide up to an additional 30 percent of the funds guaranteed by the state combined with Tier I funds, but, with certain exceptions, this tax increase must be approved by a vote of the people. Tier II funds will not be equalized by the state. If the district had a tax rate prior to the passage of KERA that placed it in Tier II, no vote is required.

EXAMPLE: Wilson County can increase its tax rate to provide an additional $861 per pupil ($2495 plus $374 times 30 percent), for a total per pupil revenue of $3730.

Guarantees/limits on increases in state funding. Two legislative provisions—commonly referred to as "Hold Harmless" provisions—have been enacted since the passage of KERA to protect school districts from excessive increases or decreases in funding due to the SEEK formula. Provisions passed in 1990 guaranteed that all districts would receive at least an eight percent increase in state funding for the 1990-91 school year and at least a five percent increase for 1991-92. Increases could not exceed 25 percent in either year. The 1992 Kentucky General Assembly passed a second provision that guaranteed that for the 1992-93 and 1993-94 school years no district could receive less state funding per pupil than it received the previous year.

Additional State Funds

KERA allocates funds for a number of mandated (or "categorical") programs. At the district level, state funding covers the preschool program, extended school services program for students who need additional time to achieve educational goals, technology, professional development, and gifted education. In addition, grants are available on a competitive basis to establish family resource and youth services centers. During the 1990-92 biennium, the state also funded a remediation program for first and second graders that had been in place since 1985. This program was dropped by the 1992 legislature on the premise that the extended school services program and nongraded primary program would eliminate the need for a remediation program.

School Construction Funds

KERA established a program that provides funds for school construction, with the goal of "more equitable distribution of school facilities among the school districts" (Office of Education Accountability, 1991, p. 25). To participate in the program, local districts must levy an equivalent

tax rate of at least five cents (in addition to the 30 cents required by SEEK). This five cents is equalized in the same way as Tier I, once the money has been committed to debt service. Districts may also levy the five cent tax but not commit it to debt service, in which case no state equalization is provided.

Methodology

Table 11 shows the number and type of 1993-94 research activities in each district relevant to funding.

Table 11

Field Activities Producing Data on Funding, 1993-94

Interviews/ conversations	Lamont	Newtown	Orange	Vanderbilt	TOTAL
Superintendents	0	2	0	1	3
School board members	0	1	0	0	2
Other central office staff	3	1	0	1	5
Principals	3	2	3	4	12
Asst. principals	0	0	0	1	1
ESS coordinator	0	0	0	2	2
Teachers	21	2	7	6	36
FRYSC staff	NA	NA	1	NA	1
Parents	4	1	1	5	11
Observations					
SBDM council meetings	6	6	4	9	25
School board meetings	2	3	0	2	7
PTO meetings	2	0	0	0	2
SBDM training	1	0	0	0	1
Document Review					
Local news articles	12	4	0	11	27
SBDM council minutes	0	0	0	1	1
School board minutes	0	0	0	3	3

Statewide Implementation of the SEEK Formula

Increase and Equalization of Funds

The KERA funding provisions poured massive amounts of new dollars into Kentucky school districts. During the 1990-91 school year, about $500 million new dollars were provided to Kentucky school districts in the form of general funding and funding for categorical programs (Augenblick, 1991). Annual reports from the Kentucky Education Association (1991, 1992) and the National Education Association (1993) reveal that the amount of funds expended for students and for teacher salaries has increased substantially, resulting in a change in Kentucky's national rankings. Tables 12 and 13 illustrate these changes.

Table 12

Estimated Current Expenditures for Public Elementary and Secondary Schools per Pupil in Average Daily Attendance in Kentucky

	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94
Per pupil expenditure	$ 3,793	$ 4,387	$ 4,924	$ 5,128	NA
National rank	41	39	31	31	NA

Table 13

Estimated Average Salaries of Kentucky Public School Teachers

	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94
Average salary	$ 26,292	$ 29,115	$ 30,870	$ 31,487	NA
National rank	37	30	28	27	NA

Under KERA, funding for education increased and the disparity in per pupil revenue among districts decreased substantially, according to an early evaluation of the SEEK program conducted for the state department of education (Augenblick, 1991). While Augenblick found that average per pupil spending was more equal than previously, he noted that inequities remained. The six wealthiest districts in the state continued to generate significantly higher per pupil revenues than average. These districts had the highest property values and relatively high tax rates.

The most recent report by the Kentucky Office of Education Accountability (OEA) (1993) on the status of SEEK implementation reveals that Augenblick's findings remain valid. OEA found that the disparity between poorer districts and wealthier districts in local tax effort and property wealth per pupil narrowed significantly from 1989-90 to 1992-93. The same was true of per pupil revenue. Average state-plus-local per pupil revenue for the poorest one-fifth of Kentucky school districts was $2,642 in 1989-90, compared to $4,110 for the wealthiest one-fifth of districts (a difference of $1,468). In 1992-93, average per pupil revenue for the poorest districts had increased to $3,990, compared to $4,874 for the wealthiest districts (a difference of $884). The Kentucky Department of Education reported (November 1993) that the gap between the richest 20 percent of Kentucky school districts and the poorest 20 percent in total available revenue was reduced by 52 percent from 1990 to 1993.

While the financial picture for Kentucky schools has been relatively rosy since KERA passed, shortfalls in state funding since that time have resulted in some leveling off of funds for education. During the 1993-94 school year, a state revenue shortfall resulted in a $9 million reduction in the base SEEK appropriation, which was passed along pro rata to school districts. Thus, the 1993-94 SEEK base was funded at 99 percent of the calculated cost. In addition, the SEEK add-ons were not fully funded. The add-on for at-risk children was funded at 96 percent, the exceptional child add-on was funded at 95 percent, the home/hospital add-on was funded at 90 percent, and the transportation add-on was funded at 90 percent (Kentucky Department of Education, March 31, 1994).

An unforeseen factor that resulted in funding reductions for some districts was an underestimation of enrollment growth by the state department of education. This miscalculation resulted in further pro rata reductions in SEEK funds to school districts that were not protected by the "hold harmless" provisions (Kentucky Department of Education, Oct. 1993).

Given the state's budget woes, funding for elementary and secondary education fared relatively well in both the 1992 and 1994 legislative sessions in that there were no major decreases in funding to districts. Funding for the state department of education, however, dropped greatly, causing significant staff cuts affecting support services to districts (Kentucky Department of Education, January 1994).

Tier I

For the 1990-91 school year, the legislature estimated that about one-fourth of the districts would take advantage of Tier I, and therefore allocated $20 million for the program. In fact, 169 of 176 school districts (96 percent) participated in Tier I and 108 of these raised local taxes to the top level, generating the full 15 percent beyond the guaranteed amount allowed without a popular vote. As a result, districts received only about 45 percent of the state equalizing funds guaranteed by the SEEK formula. State Tier I funds averaged $35 per pupil,

while local Tier I funds averaged $256 per pupil (Augenblick, 1991; Office of Education Accountability, 1991).

In 1991-92, 174 of 176 school districts participated in Tier I. Still limited by inadequate funds appropriated by the 1990 General Assembly ($25 million), local districts again did not receive the full allocation called for in the SEEK formula. State Tier I funds averaged $44 per pupil, while local funds averaged $283 per pupil (Office of Education Accountability, 1992).

In 1992-93, 173 of 176 school districts participated in Tier I. The 1992 General Assembly fully funded Tier I for the 1992-94 biennium at $81.1 million, resulting in a substantial increase in funds to eligible districts. State Tier I funds averaged $139 per pupil, while local funds averaged $257 per pupil (Office of Education Accountability, 1993).

In 1993-94, because of the state budget shortfall, Tier I was funded at 97 percent, or a total cost of $78 million (Kentucky Department of Education, March 1994). This represents a slight reduction of funding. Detailed per pupil figures are not yet available.

Tier II

Fifty-seven school districts were in the Tier II funding level during the 1990-91 school year, but none had to place the issue before the voters because their local tax rates were already set at Tier II levels before KERA passed. These districts raised an average of $120 per pupil under Tier II (Office of Education Accountability, 1991).

Again in 1991-92, no districts moved into Tier II through a popular vote. Those districts with existing taxing authority raised an average of $191 per pupil (Office of Education Accountability, 1992).

In 1992-93, 125 school districts participated in Tier II, raising an average of $180 per pupil. Again, all of these districts participated in Tier II due to existing tax authority and not by putting the issue to the voters (Office of Education Accountability, 1993).

Tier II data are not yet available for 1993-94.

In each of its annual reports for the past three years, OEA has expressed concern about the wide disparity in revenue that is produced under Tier II. OEA notes, however, that the architects of KERA sought to "bring all districts to a higher level and not level downward those making the best effort" (Office of Education Accountability, 1993, p. 44).

Hold Harmless Provisions

In 1990-91, the original hold harmless provisions protected 69 districts. Eighteen districts received the minimum eight percent increase in state funding; all of these districts would have received less if the minimum had not been in place. Fifty-one districts received the maximum 25 percent increase; 29 would have received more if the limit had not been in place (Kentucky Department of Education, May 1991).

In 1991-92, 104 districts did not receive the full five percent increase because of pro rata reductions that resulted from insufficient state funds. No districts received a 25 percent increase in 1991-92 (Kentucky Department of Education, May 1992).

In 1992-93, 30 school districts were protected under the hold harmless provisions that guaranteed that no district would receive fewer state funds per pupil than the previous year. These districts received an average of $35 per pupil of additional state funding beyond that guaranteed by the SEEK formula, at a total cost to the state of $20 million (Kentucky Department of Education, May 1993).

The hold harmless provisions had an unanticipated negative effect on districts that were not protected by the provisions. When the enrollment miscalculation described above required reductions to local school districts, the hold harmless provisions protected some districts from funding decreases. As a result, the remaining districts took a larger share of the cut than they would have if the hold harmless provisions had not been in place.

In 1993-94, the hold harmless provisions protected 21 districts, which received an average of $19 per pupil in additional state funds and cost the state $11 million. Again, the reductions due to the unanticipated enrollment growth affected only districts that were not protected by the hold harmless provisions. The $9 million reduction due to the state budget shortfall, however, was shared by all districts (Kentucky Department of Education, March 1994).[1]

Construction Program

A state department of education official estimated in 1991 that Kentucky school districts spent nearly $300 million on new construction after the passage of KERA, compared to roughly $50 million per year before the reform law was passed (Kentucky Department of Education,

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[1]At the November 1994 State Board for Elementary and Secondary Education meeting, the state department of education's finance division reported that the hold harmless provisions will only cost the state about $4.5 million in the first year of the 1994-96 biennium and $500,000 in the second year, due to an increase in the SEEK base.

Oct. 24, 1994, personal contact). While construction funding through KERA was 80 percent of the calculated amount in the 1990-92 biennium, it was funded at only about 50 percent of the established need in 1992-94. This occurred when new facility needs assessments completed by local school districts prior to the 1992 legislative session raised the total unmet building need from $1.2 billion to $2 billion (Office of Education Accountability, 1992).

For the 1990-91 school year, 174 of 176 districts statewide levied the five cent tax required to participate in the school construction program. Of this number, 98 received equalization funding. The state appropriation for school construction in 1990-91 was $10 million, which was distributed to districts by a pro rata formula. The program was funded at approximately 80 percent of the calculated amount (Office of Education Accountability, 1991).

In 1991-92, all 176 school districts levied the required tax, but not all of them committed it to debt service. As a result, the state appropriation of $13.5 million was distributed pro rata to 47 districts at approximately 80 percent of the calculated amount (Office of Education Accountability, 1992).

During 1992-93, all school districts levied the required tax and 145 received equalization funding. The state appropriation of $13.5 million was distributed to districts pro rata at about 49 percent of the calculated amount (Office of Education Accountability, 1993).

It is presumed that all districts continued to levy the five cent tax in 1993-94. Of this number, 145 received equalization funds. The state appropriation of $13.5 million was distributed at 51 percent of the calculated amount (Kentucky Department of Education, March 1994).

Categorical Programs

Table 14 shows the amount of money spent by the state for various KERA categorical programs since 1990-91.

Table 14

State Funding for KERA Categorical Programs, 1990-94

	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94
Extended School Services	$21,400,000	$27,930,000	$31,571,200	$34,136,100
Family Resource/ Youth Ctrs.	125,000	9,500,000	15,900,000	26,400,000
Gifted Education	5,900,000	5,900,000	5,900,000	5,900,000
Preschool	18,000,000	28,134,300	33,000,000	37,000,000
Professional Development	1,100,000	3,500,000	10,000,000	10,000,000
Remediation	13,800,000	13,500,000	0	0
Technology	15,000,000	33,000,000	5,000,000	10,000,000

[Sources: Kentucky Department of Education, Oct. 1993; Appalachia Educational Laboratory, 1992.]

Funding for the 1994-96 Biennium

Elementary and secondary education fared relatively well in the 1994-96 state budget, receiving an increase of $26 million for basic public school financing—about 7.5 percent more than was provided in the original budget proposal. The per pupil guaranteed base amount will remain at $2,495 in 1994-95 and increase to $2,570 in 1995-96 (Legislative Research Commission, 1994). The SEEK program was funded in the amount of $1,647,510,500 in 1994-95 and $1,693,719,200 in 1995-96 (Kentucky Department of Education, June 27, 1994).

Most categorical programs will maintain their current funding level or see an increase in the 1994-96 biennium. Table 15 shows these funding levels.

Table 15

State Funding for KERA Categorical Programs, 1994-96

	1994-95	1995-96
Extended School Services	$34,139,200	$34,182,200
Family Resource/Youth Centers	31,848,600	37,351,300
Gifted Education	6,300,000	6,320,000
Preschool	37,000,000	37,004,500
Professional Development	11,600,000	14,500,000
Technology	20,000,000	20,000,000

[Sources: Kentucky Department of Education, June 27, 1994.]

As a comparison of Tables 14 and 15 reveals, funding for extended school services and the preschool program will remain stable, while gifted funding will increase slightly. The most substantial funding increases will be in family resource/youth services centers, professional development, and technology.

Major Findings: Local Implementation of the SEEK Formula

During the 1991-92 school year, we closely examined the impact of KERA finance measures on the study districts. All four had experienced a substantial funding increase, although the amount of the increase varied depending on property wealth and local tax effort. All four districts were able to use much of the new money for much-needed salary increases for school staff. Orange County and Vanderbilt County received large enough increases to apply some of the new money to such things as professional development, additional personnel, and instructional supplies. Respondents in these two districts expressed generally positive views about KERA funding.

In Lamont County, an agricultural district with high property values but moderate incomes, many respondents were upset that the formula required so much local tax effort. Respondents in Newtown Independent, a district whose high taxes and high student test scores had earned it a reputation as one of the best school districts in the region, were incensed with the funding measures because they felt the funding equalization measures would result in a loss of competitive advantage for their district (Appalachia Educational Laboratory, 1992).

Since the time of our first report, we have not done an extensive analysis of the ongoing effects of KERA funding measures on the four districts. We have gathered data on the topic

through interviews, school board minutes, reviews of local newspapers, and observations in the schools. While these data do not provide a thorough picture of the financial situation, state-level information combined with the data we have gathered provides a sense of what has been happening since 1991-92.

General Funding for Education

Funding increase. All four districts have received a substantial increase in funding since the passage of KERA but, as mentioned above, funding has leveled off somewhat since then. Table 16 below shows the percent of change in state and local revenue in each district since 1989-90 for each year since the passage of KERA.

Table 16

Percent of Change in State and Local Revenue to Local Districts since 1989-90 (rounded figures)

	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94
Lamont County	16%	22%	21%	NA
Newtown Independent	10%	24%	23%	NA
Orange County	29%	46%	53%	NA
Vanderbilt County	27%	39%	41%	NA
STATE as a whole	21%	31%	36%	NA

[Sources: Office of Education Accountability, 1991, 1992, 1993.]

Each column in Table 17 shows the percent of change ***since 1989-90***, not the percent change from one year to the next. These figures reveal that while funding for Orange County and Vanderbilt County continued to increase all three years after KERA passed, funding in Lamont County and Newtown Independent decreased slightly in 1992-93.

1993-94 SEEK allocation. State SEEK allocations for 1993-94 for each of the four districts are explained in the following section and its accompanying tables.

Table 17

SEEK Final Calculation Totals Per Pupil, 1993-94, Part 1 (rounded figures)

[Note: All four counties began with a base guaranteed amount of $2,495.]

	ADD-ONS				
	At-risk Students	Home/Hosp. Program	Exceptional Children	Transpor-tation	TOTAL BASE SEEK
Lamont County	$ 110	$10	$ 270	$ 200	$ 3,100
Newtown Indep.	130	0	200	40	2,900
Orange County	220	20	310	280	3,300
Vanderbilt Co.	140	10	290	270	3,200

[Source: Kentucky Department of Education, March 1994.]

Each district began with the same guaranteed base of $2,495, but Orange County ended up with the highest guaranteed SEEK base because of higher numbers of at-risk, special education, home/hospital students, and high transportation costs. Newtown received the smallest base guarantee because of low numbers of special education students and low transportation costs. In fact, Newtown was guaranteed to receive nearly $500 less per pupil than Orange County—which begins to explain why respondents in Newtown have been resentful of the substantially larger influxes of funds neighboring (and poorer) districts have received under KERA.

As described in the "Overview of the Law" section, however, some of the guaranteed base amounts listed in Table 17 came from the $.30 required local tax effort. Thus, while districts were guaranteed to receive this amount, not all of the money came from the state. The amount of local money that must be contributed depends on how much money the $.30 tax effort brings in locally, which depends on the assessed property value per pupil. Table18 shows the assessed property value per pupil, how much income the $.30 tax brought in for each district, and (when this income was subtracted from the guaranteed base shown above) how much the state guaranteed to provide.

Table18

SEEK Final Calculation Totals Per Pupil, 1993-94, Part 2
(rounded figures)

	Assessed property value per pupil	Required $.30 local effort	Remaining base provided by state
Lamont County	$ 160,000	$ 480	$ 2600
Newtown Independent	161,000	485	2375
Orange County	71,000	215	3125
Vanderbilt County	158,000	475	2725

[Source: Kentucky Department of Education, March 1994.]

Table18 illustrates how the state attempts to equalize funding for poorer districts. Because Orange County had such low property wealth, the district paid a much smaller proportion of the guaranteed base than the other three districts. Indeed, in 1993-94 Orange County expected to receive over $700 more than Newtown Independent.

Tier I. The final large block of funding to consider is Tier I funds. The total amount of these funds is determined by the local tax rate. The percentage of funds provided by the state, however, is determined by the assessed property value per pupil. Districts with an assessed property value per pupil above $280,000 receive no matching funds; none of the study districts fell into this category. As described earlier, the percentage of local to state funds is determined by dividing the assessed property value per pupil by $280,000. Thus, the percentage of Tier I funds that local districts must provide varied from more than 50 percent in Newtown, Lamont County, and Vanderbilt County, to 25 percent in Orange County. Table 19 shows the amount of Tier I funds provided by the state.

Additional adjustments. Several additional adjustments are needed in order to determine a final figure for state funding to local districts. All districts that sent students to a state-operated vocational school for part of the day received a vocational education deduction. In addition, those districts that were not protected by the hold harmless provisions received a reduction in funds because of the state's miscalculation in enrollment. Yet another adjustment was caused by errors in calculations for some districts the previous year. Finally, all districts experienced a reduction due to the state budget shortfall. Table 19 shows these adjustments and the final SEEK amounts for each district.

Table 19

SEEK Final Calculation Totals Per Pupil, 1993-94, Part 3
(rounded figures)

	Add Tier I	Voc. Educ.	Enroll Adjust.	Prior Year Adj.	Budget Shortfall Adjust.	Total Adj. SEEK
Lamont County	$ 80	($ 2)	($ 25)	$ 5	($ 15)	$2600
Newtown Indep.	180	(4)	(25)	(0)	(15)	2500
Orange County	320	(3)	(30)	(2)	(20)	3400
Vanderbilt Co.	140	(5)	(25)	(6)	(15)	2800

[Source: Kentucky Department of Education, March 1994.]

Clearly, Orange County benefitted most from the SEEK funding formula. All districts should be bringing in equivalent amounts of funds, but the wealthier districts bring in more funds from local sources than does Orange County. While this does bring about equity, sources in Newtown and Lamont County have expressed resentment over the past four years about the amount of local funding they are required to raise in comparison to other districts.

Local tax effort. Table 20 shows the equivalent tax rates in each district since the year prior to KERA.

Table 20

Levied Equivalent Tax Rates, 1989-90 Through 1993-94
(cents per $100 of assessed value)
(rounded figures)

	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94
Lamont County	26	40	42	42	51
Newtown Independent	68	69	68	67	71
Orange County	35	47	51	52	61
Vanderbilt County	26	45	47	48	47

[Sources: 1989-90 figures: Kentucky Department of Education, personal contact, 10/24/91; 1990-91: Kentucky Department of Education, May 1991; 1991-92 and 1993-94: Kentucky Department of Education, March 1994; 1992-93: Kentucky Department of Education, May 1993.]

As Table 20 illustrates, Newtown Independent had the highest local tax rate before KERA passed and has continued to have the highest tax rate even without raising taxes. After KERA passed, Newtown's tax effort automatically placed it in the Tier II funding level.

The other three districts raised taxes substantially after KERA passed. Orange County and Vanderbilt County increased taxes high enough that they moved substantially into Tier I, thus receiving increased revenue from both local sources and state matching funds. Lamont County, on the other hand, barely moved into Tier I, mostly because of opposition from local farmers to a tax increase. Thus, the district missed an opportunity initially to receive the maximum amount of available state and local funds. This explains in large part why Lamont County respondents expressed frustration after the passage of KERA that their district had not received as much state funding as other districts. They attributed the problem, however, to unfairness in the funding formula as much as to lack of local tax effort.

The Lamont County school board raised taxes slightly in 1991-92 to make up for revenue losses resulting from the closure of a local manufacturing company. Even this small increase was opposed by a small but vocal group of farmers. In 1993-94, however, the board boldly increased local taxes to the maximum Tier I level. Thus, the funding situation in Lamont County should improve significantly over the next two years. The Orange County school board voted in 1992-93 to increase taxes by four percent under the authority of other tax-levying provisions, which moved the district into the Tier II funding level without having to place the issue before the voters.

Thus, two of the four districts have reached the maximum Tier I funding level and would have to place any further tax increases before the voters. Of the permissible taxes that school boards may impose, all four districts impose a property tax and a motor vehicle tax, and all except Newtown impose a three percent utility tax. The Newtown superintendent reported in 1993-94 that the school board was unwilling to impose a utility tax.

The Vanderbilt County school board has maintained the same tax rate since 1990-91, in spite of warnings from the superintendent to the school board in 1993-94 that the district was missing the opportunity for bringing in an additional $180,000 in funding by not raising taxes. The school board did, however, vote to extend its three percent utility tax to cable television.

Another critical factor related to the revenue brought in by local taxes is the tax collection rate in the districts. Because local property valuation administrators are elected officials, many Kentucky districts have historically had problems with under-assessed property and poor tax collection efforts. Collection rates for the four study districts since the year prior to KERA are shown in Table 21.

Table 21

Collection Rates for Real and Tangible Property Taxes (rounded figures)

	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94
Lamont County	99%	99%	98%	97%	NA
Newtown Independent	89%	85%	85%	NA	NA
Orange County	89%	85%	85%	NA	NA
Vanderbilt County	99%	99%	99%	99%	NA
STATE	96%	96%	96%	97%	NA

[Source: Office of Education Accountability, 1993.]

Expenditure of general funds. Immediately after KERA passed, school districts were required to allocate at least $75 per pupil for instructional expenses. In the four study districts, superintendents have allocated funds to schools to spend at their discretion. Since the 1990-91 school year, Lamont County schools have received the minimal allocation of $75 per pupil. In 1993-94, Orange County elementary schools received $90 per pupil, while the high school received $100 per pupil. Newtown has allocated instructional funds in the amount of approximately $100 per pupil each year, even prior to KERA. Vanderbilt County has been the most generous of the four districts, allocating $75 per pupil to elementary schools and $100 to the high school in 1990-91, $200/$250 in 1991-92, and $125/$175 in both 1992-93 and 1993-94.

We had no strategy in 1993-94 to study how schools spent instructional money, but we occasionally heard reports on the topic. For example, the principal of the largest elementary school in Lamont County reported that over 75 percent of the school's instructional allocation in the first two years after KERA was spent on upgrading materials and training primary program teachers. In 1993-94, the SBDM council at this school took charge of the budget and allocated the same amount of money directly to each teacher (roughly $500 per teacher). The council also allocated funds to upgrade the library by purchasing magazines, almanacs, dictionaries, 92 new books, and books and science videos for the primary program. Funds were also allocated for a new copy machine. At another Lamont County school, we heard reports that instructional funds were used to replace a television and VCR, and for paperback books. The high school SBDM council has for the past several years allocated about $15 per pupil in an attempt to upgrade the library. Funds are also allocated to each department to spend as they see fit, after approval by the council.

The amount of the instructional allocation in Newtown Independent was a matter of dispute early in the school year. Many teachers were under the impression that the superintendent promised to allocate $125 per pupil, but they ended up receiving $104 per pupil. This allocation appears to have been sufficient, however. In addition, the elementary school carried over $12,000 in instructional funds from the previous year. Each elementary school teacher was allocated about $500 for classroom supplies, plus an additional $50 at the end of the year for pencils, paper, and small supplies. The fifth-grade teachers pooled their money and purchased a VCR to share. They also purchased paperback books to accompany specific history topics. At the high school, the principal purchased instructional supplies upon request rather than allocating funds directly to teachers. We heard no reports on how this money was spent.

Orange County schools varied in the ways in which they distributed instructional money. Some principals allocated the funds to teachers or departments, others made purchases upon request, and the budget for the only SBDM school in the district at that time was managed by the SBDM council. The SBDM council allocated funds to teachers by grade group, and each group decided how to spend the money. At another elementary school in Orange County, funds were used to purchase tables and chairs for the primary program, and to purchase paperback books.

In Vanderbilt County, we heard reports that teachers at two elementary schools received $300 each for classroom supplies. A fifth-/sixth-grade teacher at one of these schools said she spent her allotment on paperback books and a dehumidifier to protect the books in her room (the school has a significant mold problem). At the same school, some of the money was used to pay for substitutes for every teacher in the building once a month so that teachers could plan in teams or visit other schools to observe instructional programs. Fourth-grade teachers received a larger allocation than other grade levels to pay for substitutes while the teachers scored portfolios and participated in assessment activities. Some of the funding was also used to pay part of an art teacher's salary (the PTA paid the remaining amount). A large chunk of funds was also used to pay for copier costs and detention programs. At the high school, instructional monies were allocated to departments, which disbursed funds to teachers upon request. Thirty-two percent of the $120,000 instructional allocation was allocated to departments, 18 percent to the library, 11 percent to the office, 10 percent for copying expenses, and six percent for the Saturday detention program.

Adequacy of funds. In Newtown Independent, Orange County, and Lamont County, sources generally reported that the level of funding for instructional materials is adequate. Several sources in Vanderbilt County, however, identified "big-ticket" items that the district needs, but cannot afford. In Lamont County, many teachers and principals acknowledged that they have more discretionary money at their disposal than ever before, but many people reported that the funding level is still inadequate.

The Lamont County teachers who complained of inadequate funds in the greatest numbers were located at the school where the principal allocated funds upon request rather than

directly to teachers. They were unaware of how much money was available to them, and had the impression (either from the principal or as a carryover from the past) that funding was still tight. One teacher said funding had not changed much since the passage of KERA. In addition, parent SBDM council members at more than one Lamont County school said that the school district continues to suffer from inadequate funds.

Lamont County sources most often identified technology and additional personnel as areas in need of funding. Several teachers said the schools needed computers. (More information on technology funding is in the "Technology" section.) Several teachers complained that they need more time for planning and materials preparation—a problem that might be remedied if the level of funding was higher. More than one teacher suggested that the district needed more central office personnel so that a staff person could be assigned the task of writing grants to obtain more funds. A parent said that the school needed an extra kindergarten teacher. A parent from another school reported that money was needed to pay for special areas teachers, such as music and art teachers. Another parent at the same school noted that the school needed air-conditioning and new plumbing. A primary teacher from the same school said more money was needed for instructional assistants for the primary program and for furniture and field trips. This teacher, like many others in Lamont County, sets up a booth each year at the school's annual fall festival to raise money for her classroom. A primary teacher and a fourth-grade teacher in the same building said they needed more money for materials such as paperback books and math manipulatives. A few sources said that school counselors were needed at the elementary level.

We saw and heard many reports of school fund-raising activities in Lamont County. For example, the district continues to charge student fees for those who can afford to pay. Fall festivals were advertised at several schools, and at least two schools held schoolwide fund-raisers in 1993-94.

A parent council member at one Lamont County school expressed frustration at the continued inadequate funding level in the district. His comments illustrate the antitax sentiment in the district, as well as a basic distrust of state government:

> The problem is when KERA took place on the ruling of the supreme court that said it was an unfair thing, that money still has not trickled down to these counties. Everything is supposed to be equal and this is supposed to balance everything. Everybody's tax rates are still being raised and tons of money has gone to Frankfort in varying ways, four or five tax increases. And yet, when I go to a site-based meeting and a teacher tells me that we only have enough books for half the students because they are considered only a supplement...where did the money go? What happened to the money? .... [The school board] was forced to [raise taxes] because they were going to lose state matching funds. And they're going to re-assess all the property. Here's the situation. The equity is not coming from the state level. There's money up there being wasted on too many

high-paying jobs that are really unnecessary. We're perpetuating the bureaucracy and now it is getting larger because we have new programs...and our kids suffer.

In Newtown Independent, several teachers and principals reported that the funding level was adequate, but that more money was needed for technology. Indeed, the PTA purchased 18 CD-ROMs for the elementary school to accompany new computers purchased with technology funds (see the "Technology" section). The elementary PTA sponsors a large fund-raising activity each year. Also, a primary teacher reported that she wanted to hold fund-raising activities to buy supplies for thematic units, and we heard reports that the elementary school had re-instituted student fees.

Teachers in Orange County generally said that the level of instructional funding was so much higher than pre-KERA that they were satisfied with what they had received. Some teachers qualified their remarks, however, by noting that they make reasonable requests and do not ask for much. An elementary school principal reported that more money is needed for technology, and a teacher at another elementary school made the same observation, saying that she needed a television, VCR, and a computer. At a third school, while teachers reported that they felt adequately supplied with materials, and substitute teachers were available to allow teachers to attend training sessions, no effort was made to provide aides or substitutes in order to give teachers more regular planning or consultative time.

The majority of Vanderbilt County teachers who spoke to this issue also reported adequate funding for instructional supplies, although junior high science teachers at two schools reported that their instructional allotments were inadequate to purchase laboratory equipment that was needed for hands-on instruction and experimentation. One of these teachers noted that lowering class size would be beneficial:

> When you start modifying what goes on in the room and really getting serious about doing a good job, it takes lots of money. Like here, we don't have a lab, right? If you wanted to do one thing that would make more of a difference than any idea no matter how clever, just get enough money so that instead of having 30 in this class, have 12. That will instantly transform what goes on in here and upgrade the quality. That's what I mean by one of the fundamental deals, you know, like, one of the things that could be done is to drop the class size, or come up with facilities that provide the kind of, like, we're teaching [a hands-on science program] because we don't have a lab. We're working with a Chevette, but we'd like to have a Cadillac. That's another problem I have with KERA: they want a Cadillac on a Chevette budget.

Parent council members at all schools in Vanderbilt County identified areas where additional funding was needed. One parent said more money was needed for extracurricular programs beyond basketball. A parent at another school said that the school needed full-time special areas teachers. A parent from a third school said the school needed a new building.

Parents at two schools reported that more money was needed to hire more teachers so that class size could be lowered. Both of these schools had hired instructional assistants in 1993-94 for classes that were over capsize (too large for a single teacher to manage). In addition, one of these schools lost a junior high teacher when the enrollment dropped in 1993-94, and was threatened with losing another teacher. The principal commented on this:

> My biggest fear right now is that we could lose a teacher, because I think we're just at the point where we're starting to make real progress. This school...has had the lowest test scores in the county for umpteen zillion years, apparently. I think you're going to see a big change in that over the next few years. We exceeded our threshold in the fourth grade, and we were like, four-tenths of a point from achieving it in the 8th grade, and we still have until the end of next year to meet it. I think we're definitely on the right track here. I see us losing teachers, puts us back in that situation where we'll have to have split classes and larger rooms and people doubling up, and I think that could very easily put us right back in the situation they were in before. I worry about that.

Categorical Funding

Extended school services. Funding for the extended school services program (ESS) to the four districts since the passage of KERA is shown in Table 22.

Table 22

State Funding for ESS
(Rounded figures)

	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94
Lamont County	$ 56,000	$ 79,000	$ 76,000	$ 66,000
Newtown Independent	25,000	32,000	35,000	29,000
Orange County	146,000	269,000	208,000	200,000
Vanderbilt County	64,000	81,000	88,000	85,000

[Sources: Kentucky Department of Education, personal contacts, 2/25/92 and 6/29/94.]

In addition to the ESS funds that are routinely provided to school districts, the Kentucky Department of Education offers districts the opportunity to apply for "innovative" ESS grants. Lamont County applied for and received two such grants to operate summer programs in both 1993 and 1994. The 1994 grant provided $38,000 for a summer program for 30-40 eighth-grade

students to assist them in making the transition to high school. The youth services center at Orange County High School also received a $40,000 innovative grant, part of which was used for a 1993 summer language program.

We heard few complaints about the funding level of the ESS program. Most sources said that the program is helpful to students and that they are grateful for the opportunity to provide extra help to students in need. Some contacts in Vanderbilt County, however, complained in 1993-94 that they would like to have more ESS funding so they could offer summer programs. No mention was made of applying for an innovative grant, however. In addition, in Lamont County teachers and principals reported that ESS classes are too big to provide the individual help students need.

Family resource/youth services centers. Funding for family resource centers (FRCs) and youth services centers (YSCs) is provided through grants. Any school where 20 percent or more of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch is eligible for a center. The minimum grant is $10,000 and the maximum is $90,000. The program has not been fully funded, so not all schools that apply for the grants receive them. The current goal is to fund all eligible sites by the end of 1997 (Cabinet for Human Resources, personal contact, 12/9/94).

Shortly after KERA passed, the Orange County school district applied for grants to fund centers at all of its schools. Two FRCs and one YSC were funded the first year. By 1993-94, three other schools had received funding to operate FRCs. Table 23 shows the grant amounts for these centers.

Table 23

State Grants to Orange County for FRYSCs
(rounded figures)

	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94
FRC Number 1	--	--	$ 63,000
FRC Number 2	$30,000	$ 44,000	44,000
FRC Number 3	--	--	74,000
FRC Number 4	51,000	77,000	77,000
High School YSC	86,000	90,000	90,000
TOTAL	167,000	210,000	347,000

[Source: Kentucky Cabinet for Human Resources.]

As we reported in the December 1991 issue of "Notes from the Field," state funding is not adequate to fund all the programs and services deemed necessary by center staff. As a result, the Orange County district invests considerable local funds in the centers.

Gifted education. State funding for gifted education has remained stable over the past several years. The most recent data on state funding for gifted education is shown in Table 24.

Table 24

State Funding for Gifted Education
(rounded figures)

	% gifted students	State funding	Local funding	TOTAL
Lamont County	4%	$22,400	$ 7,900	$ 30,300
Newtown Independent	11%	22,400	30,000	52,400
Orange County	3%	44,800	53,000	97,800
Vanderbilt County	5%	22,400	17,200	39,600

[Source: Kentucky Department of Education, personal contact, February 1994.]

As these figures reveal, all four local districts invest local funds in the gifted education program. Local sources in most of the districts report that state funding for gifted education is not enough to cover the salary of one gifted education teacher. Sources in Newtown Independent reported in 1993-94 that the elementary school holds fund-raisers to supplement state gifted funding, and that there is no program for gifted students at the high school due to lack of funds.

Table 24 also reveals that the amount of local funding for gifted education varies substantially. This results in disparities in the amount of funding per gifted pupil. While Lamont County, Newtown Independent, and Vanderbilt County all expended $450-$500 per gifted pupil, Orange County expended over $800 per gifted pupil.

Preschool. Table 25 shows state funding for the preschool program in all four districts since the passage of KERA.

Table 25

State Funding for Preschool Education
(rounded figures)

	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94
Lamont County	$38,000	$61,000	$79,000	$88,000
Newtown Independent	0	0	0	0
Orange County	0	59,000	77,000	131,000
Vanderbilt County	38,000	114,000	106,000	114,000

[Sources: Kentucky Department of Education, personal contacts, 2/17/92; and figures obtained from the Kentucky Department of Education, Feb. 1994.]

No reports were heard in 1993-94 about preschools or the adequacy of funding. At the January meeting of the State Board of Education, however, the board approved requiring local districts to demonstrate that Head Start programs are being fully utilized before they can request an expansion of the preschool program. This requirement was based on the rationale that no additional funding would be available for the preschool program in the next biennium (Kentucky Department of Education, March 2-3, 1994).

Professional development. Table 26 shows state funding for professional development since the passage of KERA. Professional development funds in 1990-91 were based on an appropriation of $1 per pupil, and were meant to be used for planning. The appropriation was raised to $5 per pupil in 1991-92, and $16 per pupil in both 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Table 26

State Funding for Professional Development
(rounded figures)

	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94
Lamont County	$ 1,500	$ 8,800	$ 26,000	$ 25,000
Newtown Independent	1,500	4,700	14,000	14,000
Orange County	4,000	21,000	61,000	60,000
Vanderbilt County	1,500	8,800	26,000	26,000

[Sources: 1990-91 figures (all approximate): Appalachia Educational Laboratory, April 1992; 1991-92: Kentucky Department of Education, personal contact, 3/4/92; 1992-93 and 1993-94: Kentucky Dept. of Education, personal contact, February 1994.]

Many complaints were heard in 1990-91 and 1991-92 about inadequate funding for professional development—especially in Lamont County and Newtown Independent, where state funding was not as strongly supplemented as in the other two districts. In the past two years, these complaints have continued in Lamont County and have been negligible in the other three districts.

While teachers sometimes report that they need more training on certain instructional practices or programs, they most often attribute the inadequate training to a lack of time or their own unwillingness to spend additional time away from the classroom. In fact, many teachers have complained that they have had to spend too much time out of the classroom to attend various workshops or meetings related to KERA implementation. They would prefer additional professional development days when children are not in school.

Some schools have supplemented professional development funds by using instructional funds to pay for substitute teachers so that classroom teachers may visit other schools to observe programs, attend workshops or meetings, or plan together.

Technology. The state did not begin to disseminate funds for technology to school districts until 1992-93. The state requires that all districts match the state allotment for technology on a dollar-for-dollar basis. Districts received a technology allocation in both 1992-93 and 1993-94 of about $35.00 per pupil in average daily attendance (ADA).

To obtain state technology matching funds in 1992-93, districts had to verify their ADA and submit technology procurements to the state department of education. In 1993-94, districts had to verify their ADA, develop a technology plan that included unmet technology needs based on state standards, and match the state offer.

Table 27 shows how much money each district received from the state for technology the past two years.

Table 27

State Funding for Technology
(rounded figures)

	1992-93	1993-94
Lamont County	$ 56,000	$ 55,000
Newtown Independent	30,000	30,000
Orange County	134,000	130,000
Vanderbilt County	58,000	56,000

[Source: Kentucky Department of Education, personal contact, 1/26/94.]

Of the four study districts, Vanderbilt County has easily made the most progress in the area of technology. In 1991-92, the school board invested over $800,000 in computers and computer training. This money came from the district general fund. Every elementary classroom in the district was equipped with five computers, and the high school received a computer lab. In 1992-93, the district required teachers to use the additional five professional development days provided by the state for computer training. Thus, Vanderbilt County got a head start on the other three districts, each of which had to rely primarily on state funding for technology.

In 1992-93, all four districts held their state technology funds in escrow until they could provide a local match for the funds. This delay did not cause major problems for Vanderbilt County because the district had already moved forward, but the delay may have prevented the other districts from moving forward as quickly as they might have. In fact, we heard many reports from Lamont County in 1993-94 that the level of funding for technology was inadequate. At several Lamont County elementary schools, we were told that there were only two or three computers in the entire building, and that these had been purchased through fund-raising activities. The largest elementary school in the district had a computer room equipped with only eight computers. In 1993-94 the high school was preparing to spend its $33,000 technology allocation on a computer lab with 30 computers and three printers.

We heard several reports in Newtown during 1993-94 on how the technology funds were being spent. For example, $13,000 was spent on wiring the high school and approximately $45,000 was to be spent on a high school computer lab. Almost $30,000 was spent at the elementary school for 18 computers for Grades 4-6 and for a laptop computer which teachers can check out. In addition, the school purchased three computers for the library. The PTA pitched in by providing funds to purchase 18 CD-ROMs and nine printers for the 18 computers purchased with technology funds. At the high school, 30 student work stations and a teacher work station were used for teaching keyboarding and computer applications. In addition, the Chapter 1 room contains 12 computers, and additional computers are located in the office and library.

Very few reports were heard during 1993-94 on the status of technology funding and expenditures in Orange County. We learned in October that the school board had delayed spending the state technology money, and that the state department of education had forbidden the purchase of technology for a long-promised new middle school until the department could be sure that it would actually open. A few other reports indicated that technology funding did not trickle down to the schools until late in the school year. For example, the principal at an outlying elementary school reported that the school had some computers that were purchased through fund-raisers, and that one computer was donated by a student who had won it. The central elementary school librarian said she possessed the only CD-ROM in the district. By the spring, however, classroom observations revealed that first the middle school teachers and later all elementary and primary teachers had one computer per classroom. Some of these computers

were used solely for recordkeeping, while others were also used by students. All classroom teachers reported that they expected at least one additional computer in 1994-95.

We heard several reports about how technology money was being spent in Vanderbilt County. Each school received an allocation based on enrollment. An elementary school principal reported that the school would spend $250 per classroom for wiring. At another elementary school, additional computers were purchased for a computer lab in the library. New computers (still in the boxes) were seen at a third elementary school during a late winter visit. The high school used part of its allocation to create a second computer lab and to purchase a CD-ROM for the library. Observations in February at the high school revealed that each classroom was equipped with a television, a VCR, and a computer. Five computers were also set aside for the yearbook staff.

Discussion

KERA has brought large sums of additional funding to the four study districts. Even though the study sample is too small to make definitive statements about equity, it also appears that some measure of funding equity has been achieved among the districts. Orange County, which is considerably less wealthy than the other three districts, is now able to provide teacher salaries, programs, services, and teacher training at a comparable level. Schools in all four districts have had discretionary instructional funds available in unprecedented amounts. Educators in all districts except Lamont County have reported that their classrooms are now supplied with nearly all the instructional materials they need.

This is not to say that the level of funding is adequate to meet all needs. As reported above, many teachers, principals, and parents reported that there is insufficient funding for major expenditures that would really make a difference in classrooms, such as extra teachers to reduce class size and give teachers more planning time, full-time special areas teachers, and extra technology. Still, the fact that most of teachers' needs had been met except for these large-ticket items illustrates that funding under KERA has made a big difference to schools in the four study districts.

It is important that the current level of funding be at least maintained if not increased, so that schools may begin to expend funds in the ways listed in the preceding paragraph. Some schools have already begun to do this.

It appears that the level of funding for some KERA-mandated programs such as preschools have been sufficient. The legislature has increased funding for family resource and youth services centers in order to reach the goal of having centers in all eligible sites, and for professional development to help teachers acquire the skills they need to implement KERA.

Funding for other categorical programs has remained and will remain constant—which seems appropriate.

In spite of the influx of funds under KERA, attitudes toward funding have not changed a great deal since 1990. At that time, sources in Orange County and Vanderbilt County were very pleased with the funding formula, while people in Newtown and Lamont County were not. This remains the case, although some moderation in opinions has been noted. For instance, several Vanderbilt County sources have expressed concern that educational funding has leveled off. In Lamont County, the people we have spoken to have not been as frustrated with funding as they were in the beginning, mostly because the instructional allotments to schools have enabled them to make needed purchases. Still, most people we talked to in the district believe that more funding is needed. This attitude may change over the next biennium, however, now that the school board has voted to increase taxes to the top of Tier I. This increase should bring in considerable new money for the district.

Perhaps the smallest change in public attitudes toward KERA funding has occurred in Newtown. We reported in 1992 that Newtown respondents believed the SEEK formula penalized those districts that had always exerted a great deal of local tax effort to fund schools. Many people resented the fact that surrounding school districts were able to increase or improve their programs, services, and staff to a level nearly comparable to that in Newtown. While this did not result in a reduction in funding or services for Newtown, many people resented the loss of competitive advantage the district had enjoyed prior to KERA. The high school principal expressed this view in 1993-94:

> Our tax base is real high and we do not have a lot of kids that are at-risk kids. So as a result, we do not get the tremendous increase of money that a lot of school systems got. So we're struggling right now. In fact, Mr. [the superintendent] said the other day that for the first time, we'll probably lay off all aides and then rehire what we need.... We have never had to do that until now. I know Mr. [the superintendent] was pointing out that the superintendent's salary is like—he's way at the bottom part of it. And the teachers' salaries here have gone from... [being] in the top 30 or 40, and now we're down close to 100.

AEL predicted in 1992 that attitudes toward KERA funding might change in Newtown once the Tier I program was fully funded, because this would bring in substantial state matching dollars. In fact, we have seen very little change in attitude. The predominant sentiment in the district continues to be disappointment that other districts have received so much more state money than Newtown. Many people in Newtown believe that bringing poorer districts up to the same funding level as Newtown actually results in a loss of funding for Newtown—or at least a loss of competitive advantage. A school board member spoke to this issue in June, 1994:

> Proportionately per student, we didn't get nearly as much money as the poorer districts who weren't willing to tax themselves. And I understood the part about

trying to equalize things, but...it's never been my idea to bring those bottom people up and bring the top people down and then you have just a bunch of people in the middle. I would try to float everybody up, if I could. It seems to be penalizing the better performing systems in that extent.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I

Five-Year Research Questions

KERA STUDY FIVE-YEAR RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Primary Program:

   A. Did the schools prepare and follow their primary program action plans?

   B. To what extent do the primary programs, as implemented, incorporate the following critical attributes:

      - o Developmentally appropriate educational practices
      - o Multi-age/Multi-ability classrooms
      - o Continuous progress
      - o Authentic assessment
      - o Qualitative reporting methods
      - o Professional teamwork
      - o Positive parent involvement

   C. To what extent do the primary programs, as implemented, give evidence of promoting student acquisition of the capabilities set forth in KERA, and of the skills required to move on to fourth grade?

   D. If evidence exists that the characteristics listed in items B and C above have been incorporated into the primary programs, how was this achieved? If these characteristics have not been incorporated, why not?

   E. What accounts for variation among the districts and schools in their ability to successfully (as described above) implement the primary program?

   F. To what extent can what occurred in the study districts relevant to the primary program be attributed to KERA, other state initiatives, or district history?

   G. What implications do these findings have for state policy?

2. Family Resource Centers/Youth Services Centers:

   A. What plans has the district made for family resource centers and youth services centers?

   B. How many centers were funded and/or are in place?

   C. Are the centers following the plans spelled out in their

proposals?

D. To what extent is there evidence that the family resource centers and youth services centers are identifying families and students in need of social, health, or other services to overcome barriers to school performance?

E. To what extent are the centers promoting coordination of services by community agencies and the schools in ways that link economically disadvantaged students and their families with available social and health services?

F. To what extent are the centers promoting the development of or providing services that are needed but not currently available in the community?

G. If so, how was this achieved? If not, why not?

H. What accounts for variation among the four districts in their ability to successfully (as described above) implement the centers?

I. To what extent can what occurred in the study districts relevant to family resource and youth service centers be attributed to KERA or other influences, such as other state initiatives or the district's history?

J. What implications do these findings have for state policy?

3. Governance/Authority Structure:

A. How has the authority structure in the four districts changed?

- How many schools have implemented SBDM and at what state of development are they?
- Do administrators, teachers, and parents at local schools, working through school councils and committees, make and implement policy and personnel decisions that are designed to promote improved student performance?
- Do local school boards set district policies that are designed to promote improved student performance?
- Do local school boards support administrative and local school efforts designed to improve student performance?
- Do the superintendent and central office administration implement policies set forth by the school board?
- Do the superintendent and central office administration support policy and personnel decisions of school councils?

B. If so, how was this achieved? If not, why not?

C. In what ways has the relationship between the local district and the state department of education changed?

D. What accounts for variation among the four districts in their ability to alter their governance structure as described above?

E. To what extent can what occurred in the study districts relevant to authority structure be attributed to KERA or other influences, such as other state initiatives or the district's history?

F. What are the implications of these findings for state policy?

4. Grades 4-12:

A. What changes occur in grades 4-12--for instance, in instruction, assessment, technology?

B. What indications are there that the strategies employed by the districts are likely to assist students to acquire the capabilities and goals defined by KERA?

C. What variation exists among district approaches to this task, and what accounts for this variation?

D. In what ways are these changes related to KERA or to other influences?

E. What are the implications of these findings for state policy?

5. Funding:

A. Is state education funding adequate for the programs:

- o Mandated by KERA?
- o Identified and developed by the school board, superintendent, administrators, and local schools as necessary to assist students in acquiring the capabilities and goals defined by KERA?

B. If so, how has this been achieved? If not, why not?

C. What accounts for variation among districts in their ability to adequately fund necessary programs?

D. To what extent can what occurred in the study districts relevant to funding be attributed to KERA or to other influences, such as other state funding initiatives or the district's history?

E. What are the implications of these findings for state policy?

6. Interactions:

A. What interactions exist among the elements of KERA?

B. How and under what conditions do such interactions occur?

C. What factors affect these interactions?

D. What priorities are being changed in local schools as a result of KERA, and what is being lost?

E. What accounts for variation in interaction of KERA components among the four study districts?

F. What are the implications of these findings for state policy?

Appendix II

Kentucky's Academic Expectations

Kentucky's Academic Expectations

Goal 1 - Students are able to use basic communication and math skills for purposes and situations they will encounter throughout their lives.

1.1	Students use reference tools such as dictionaries, almanacs, encyclopedias, and computer reference programs and research tools such as interviews and surveys to find the information they need to meet specific demands, explore interests, and solve specific problems.
1.2	Students make sense of the variety of materials they read.
1.3	Students make sense of the various things they observe.
1.4	Students make sense of the various messages to which they listen.
1.5-1.9	Students use mathematical ideas and procedures to communicate, reason, and solve problems.
1.10	Students organize information through development and use of classification rules and systems.
1.11	Students write using appropriate forms, conventions, and styles to communicate ideas and information to different audiences for different purposes.
1.12	Students speak using appropriate forms, conventions, and styles to communicate ideas and information to different audiences for different purposes.
1.13	Students make sense of and communicate ideas with the visual arts.
1.14	Students make sense of and communicate ideas with music.
1.15	Students make sense of and communicate ideas with movement.
1.16	Students use computers and other kinds of technology to collect, organize, and communicate information and ideas.

Goal 2 - Students shall develop their abilities to apply core concepts and principles from mathematics, the sciences, the arts, the humanities, social studies, practical living studies, and vocational studies to what they will encounter throughout their lives.

Science

2.1	Students understand scientific ways of thinking and working and use those methods to solve real-life problems.
2.2	Students identify, analyze, and use patterns such as cycles and trends to understand past and present events and predict possible future events.
2.3	Students identify and analyze systems and the ways their components work together or affect each other.
2.4	Students use the concept of scale and scientific models to explain the organization and functioning of living and nonliving things and predict other characteristics that might be observed.
2.5	Students understand that under certain conditions nature tends to remain the same or move toward a balance.
2.6	Students understand how living and nonliving things change over time and the factors that influence that change.

Math

2.7 Students understand number concepts and use numbers appropriately and accurately.

2.8 Students understand various mathematical procedures and use them appropriately and accurately.

2.9 Students understand space and dimensionality concepts and use them appropriately and accurately.

2.10 Students understand measurement concepts and use measurements appropriately and accurately.

2.11 Students understand mathematical change concepts and use them appropriately and accurately.

2.12 Students understand mathematical structure concepts including the properties and logic of various mathematical systems.

2.13 Students understand and appropriately use statistics and probability.

Social Studies

2.14 Students understand the democratic principles of justice, equality, responsibility, and freedom and apply them to real-life situations.

2.15 Students can accurately describe various forms of government and analyze issues of importance to citizens in a democracy, including authority, power, civic action, and rights and responsibilities.

2.16 Students observe, analyze, and interpret human behaviors, social groupings, and institutions to better understand people and the relationships among individuals and among groups..

2.17 Students interact effectively and work cooperatively with the diverse ethnic and cultural groups of our nation and world.

2.18 Students understand economic principles and are able to make economic decisions that have consequences for daily living.

2.19 Students recognize and understand the relationship between people and geography and apply their knowledge in real-life situations.

2.20 Students understand, analyze, and interpret historical events, conditions, trends, and issues to develop historical perspective.

2.21 (Original outcomes was incorporated into 2.16).

Arts and Humanities

2.22 Students create works of art and make presentations to convey a point of view.

2.23 Students analyze their own and others' artistic products and performances using accepted standards.

2.24 Students have knowledge of major works of art, music, and literature and appreciate creativity and the contributions of the arts and humanities.

2.25 Through their productions and performances or interpretations, students show an understanding of the influence of time, place, personality, and society on the arts and humanities.

2.26 Through the arts and humanities, students recognize that although people are different, they share many common experiences and attitudes.

2.27 Students recognize and understand the similarities and differences among languages.

2.28 Students understand and communicate in a second language.

Practical Living Studies

2.29 Students demonstrate skills that promote individual well-being and healthy family relationships.

2.30 Students evaluate consumer products and services and make effective consumer decisions.

2.31 Students demonstrate the knowledge and skills they need to remain physically healthy and to accept responsibility for their own physical well-being.

2.32 Students demonstrate strategies for becoming and remaining mentally and emotionally healthy.

2.33 Students demonstrate the skills to evaluate and use services and resources available in their community.

2.34 Students perform physical movement skills effectively in a variety of settings.

2.35 Students demonstrate knowledge and skills that promote physical activity and involvement in physical activity throughout their lives.

Vocational Studies

2.36 Students use strategies for choosing and preparing for a career.

2.37 Students demonstrate skills and work habits that lead to success in future schooling and work.

2.38 Students demonstrate skills such as interviewing, writing resumes, and completing applications that are needed to be accepted into college or other post-secondary training or to get a job.

Goal 3 - Students shall develop their abilities to become self-sufficient individuals.

(Goal 3 is included in the Kentucky statutes as a learning goal but is not included in the state's academic assessment program. The outcomes that were initially included under this goal were deleted when the State Board revised the outcomes in May 1994.)

Goal 4 - Students shall develop their abilities to become responsible members of a family, work group, or community, including demonstrating effectiveness in community service.

(Goal 4 is included in the Kentucky statutes as a learning goal but is not included in the state's academic assessment program. The outcomes that were initially included under this goal were deleted when the State Board revised the outcomes in May 1994.)

Goal 5 - Students shall develop their abilities to think and solve problems in school situations and in a variety of situations they will encounter in life.

5.1 Students use critical thinking skills such as analyzing, prioritizing, categorizing, evaluating, and comparing to solve a variety of problems in real-life situations.

5.2 Students use creative thinking skills to develop or invent novel, constructive ideas or products.

5.3 Students organize information to develop of change their understanding of a concept.

5.4 Students use a decision-making process to make informed decisions among options.

5.5 Students use problem-solving processes to develop solutions to relatively complex problems.

Goal 6 - Students shall develop their abilities to connect and integrate experiences and new knowledge from all subject matter fields with what they have previously learned and build on past learning experiences to acquire new information through various media sources.

6.1 Students connect knowledge and experiences from different subject fields.

6.2 Students use what they already know to acquire new knowledge, develop new skills, or interpret new experiences.

6.3 Students expand their understanding of existing knowledge by making connections with new knowledge, skills, and experiences.

[Source: Kentucky Department of Education, 1994]

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